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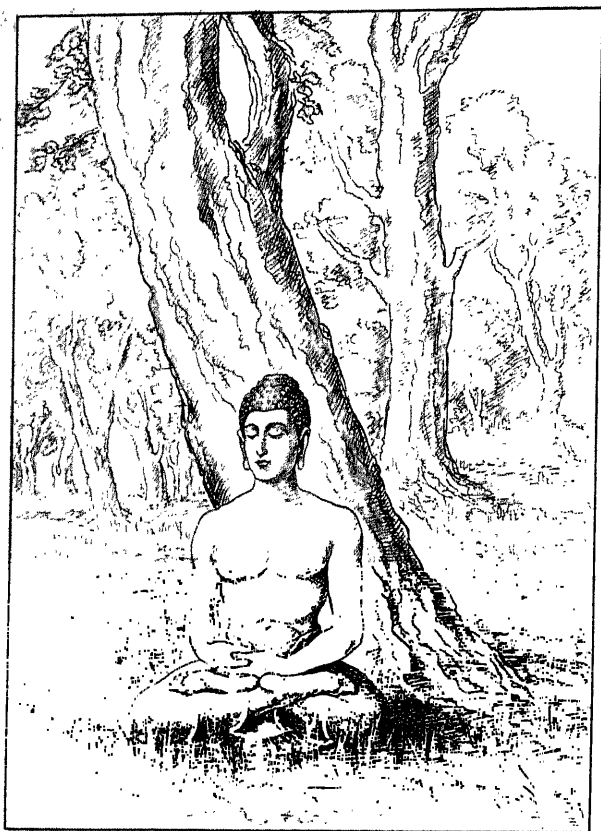
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THE MESSAGE OF BUDDHA

BY

ARDASER SORABJEE N. WADIA, M.A.

*Sometime Professor of English and History, Elphinstone College,
Bombay : Dakshina Fellow in Natural Science*

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'Buddhism demands no implicit faith, offers no scientific demonstration of its truth. It is a kind of drama, really a *movie*—the unique, single, actual, moving drama of the struggle of Truth with Life and of Life with Truth.'

Dahlke.

Dedicated
to
the Memory
of
a Single-minded Seeker after Truth,
that most original of Buddhist Thinkers,
PAUL DAHLKE,
whose
discerning scholarship
and
penetrating intellect
have shed
New Light
on
BUDDHISM

'The Creed of Buddhism is like the creed of every genuine science—a *Register of Results*, and not a *Set of Dogmas* enforced on mankind by any Heaven-sent Authority.'

Edmond Holmes.

PREFACE

As this is the final volume of my *Message* series, it completes a work which I first set myself to do twenty-five years ago. That work had two objectives, one general, the other special. The former was to carry on a Comparative Study of the great religions of the world by winnowing out their leading ideas and tenets and presenting them in a form and language immediately applicable to our times and surroundings. The special objective was to create, as far as I could, a Spiritual Unity in my native land of India, replacing the clash of religious differences prevailing there. I realized even then that if ever there was to be peace and harmony, and mutual understanding of each other's feelings and sentiments, in the 'warring world of Hindustan,' it would be, *not* by vociferously proclaiming Hindu-Muslim Unity, but by systematically carrying on a comparative study of the great religions of the world, and increasingly proving (as I attempt to do in my *Messages*) that, in spite of manifest divergences in creed and in modes of worship, there is yet a basic and a demonstrable unity of thought and ideals among the various faiths which at present sway the mind and guide the impulse of the antagonistic nationalities of India.

Taking up the present *Message*, as in the other five volumes of the series, this work is designed to bring together in a compact form the leading ideas and tenets of Buddhism, interpreting them in the light of the fundamental principles of human life as well as of the latest research in the science of human mind. Apart from this psychological aspect, much of the material the book contains will be found in the works of scholars and exegetists who have made a name for themselves in the Buddhist world of letters. Consequently, my work lays claim to no originality of research, to no finality of judgment, not even to any special form of scholarship, despite frequent references to Pali and Sanskrit writings. So vast has been the mass of material brought together in the last fifty years by the lifelong labours and disinterested researches of distinguished Buddhist scholars that for a long time to come the task before a new interpreter of Buddha's Creed lies, I believe, in a discerning survey, at once critical and sympathetic, of the gathered spiritual harvest rather than in an indiscriminate piling up of fresh material. At all events, I am tempted to speak of my *Message of Buddha* in the spirit and language of that most eminent of the later *Mahāyāna* poets, Shanti Deva. In introducing his great *Bodhicaryāvatara* the poet says:

Nothing new will be told here, neither do I claim to have any special skill in the writing of books: therefore, I have done this work with the primary intention of collecting and conserving my own thoughts and en-

lightening myself rather than my fellow-workers. By it the sacred impulse within me to frame something by which the cause of 'Good Life' may be advanced is fulfilled; if, however, a fellow-seeker should find in it something to interest and enlighten him, my efforts will have fulfilled another end as well.

Strictly speaking, I ought to have named this book—*The Message of the Buddha*, just as I should have more correctly called my work on Christianity—*The Message of the Christ*, as 'Buddha' and 'Christ' are both titles and ought in consequence to be preceded by the definite article. But as it happens that in each case the title has gradually acquired the force and significance of a personal name, so Jesus the Christ or Anointed is commonly spoken of as 'Christ'; likewise, one may without any ambiguity or impropriety speak of Gautama the Buddha or Enlightened simply as 'Buddha.'

At the very outset let me say that the Buddhism I am attempting to interpret in the following pages is the Buddhism of Buddha himself. With the Buddhism of the Buddhist world, with the special creed of this or that Buddhist Church—with, for instance, the mysticism and idealities of the Northern *Mahāyāna* School or the occultism and ethicalities of the Southern *Himāyānā* School, I am not concerned except in so far as they help to elucidate the original, untainted teaching of the Master himself. As in Christianity, it is not in the doctrine of any church, high or low, so likewise in Buddhism, it is not in any sect or

school of thought, north or south, that the spirit of the Master's teaching is preserved in all its pristine purity, unvitiated by the denominational prejudices and unencumbered by the excrescences inevitable in Time.

As in the pursuit of Truth, so in an inquiry pertaining to a problem in religion or philosophy, we must enter upon it, under what Bacon calls 'dry light'—that is, with a perfectly open mind, free from all prejudice, never accepting an article of faith, cherished though it be universally and hallowed though it be by centuries of undoubting acceptance, without first challenging its truth and reality, even though such a challenge may appear on the face of it superfluous and even presumptuous. If I am to write on Buddhism in this spirit of a pure pursuit of Truth, it is evident that I cannot promise a Buddhist reader of my *Message* an affirmation of certain beliefs about his religion which he has long cherished and dearly garnered in his heart. On the contrary, it is incumbent on me that I should prepare him beforehand for statements in the following pages which, unless his mind is made of sturdier stuff, may jar harshly against his deeply rooted mental habits, and at the same time I may warn him that my disagreement with certain tacitly-accepted Buddhistic Dogmas, which he will find expressed herein, is no mere vague scepticism, perfunctorily developed and casually manifested, but a quite sharply-defined objection to very widely held and deeply revered Buddhist concepts and ideals.

From the above it follows that if we wish to commune with the soul of a prophet in order to renew in our own souls the springs of his spiritual life, we must not only leave far behind, and go far beyond, the settled rites and ritual, the long-accepted forms and formularies of the religion that goes under his name, but must also strive in the first place to be perfectly open-minded so as to throw back our vision and create before our mind's eye a truly-proportioned picture of the physical environment of the age in which the prophet lived, moved, and had his being, and then by an effort of our imagination saturate ourselves in the spiritual atmosphere and mental aura of the prophet's own unique personality. Rightly does Pratt in his *Pilgrimage of Buddhism* say: 'To give the feeling of an alien religion it is necessary to do more than expound its concepts and describe its history. One must catch its emotional undertone, enter sympathetically into its sentiments, feel one's way into its symbols, its cult, its art, and then seek to impart these things not merely by scientific exposition but in all sorts of indirect ways.' Even such was my own endeavour in my previous *Messages*, and must again be in this completing volume.

Another thing the reader must equally bear in mind before commencing to read this book is that Gautama was born and brought up—nay more, lived and died—a Hindu. Buddha's creed and scheme of life, far-reaching and original though they undoubtedly were and subversive, in fact, of

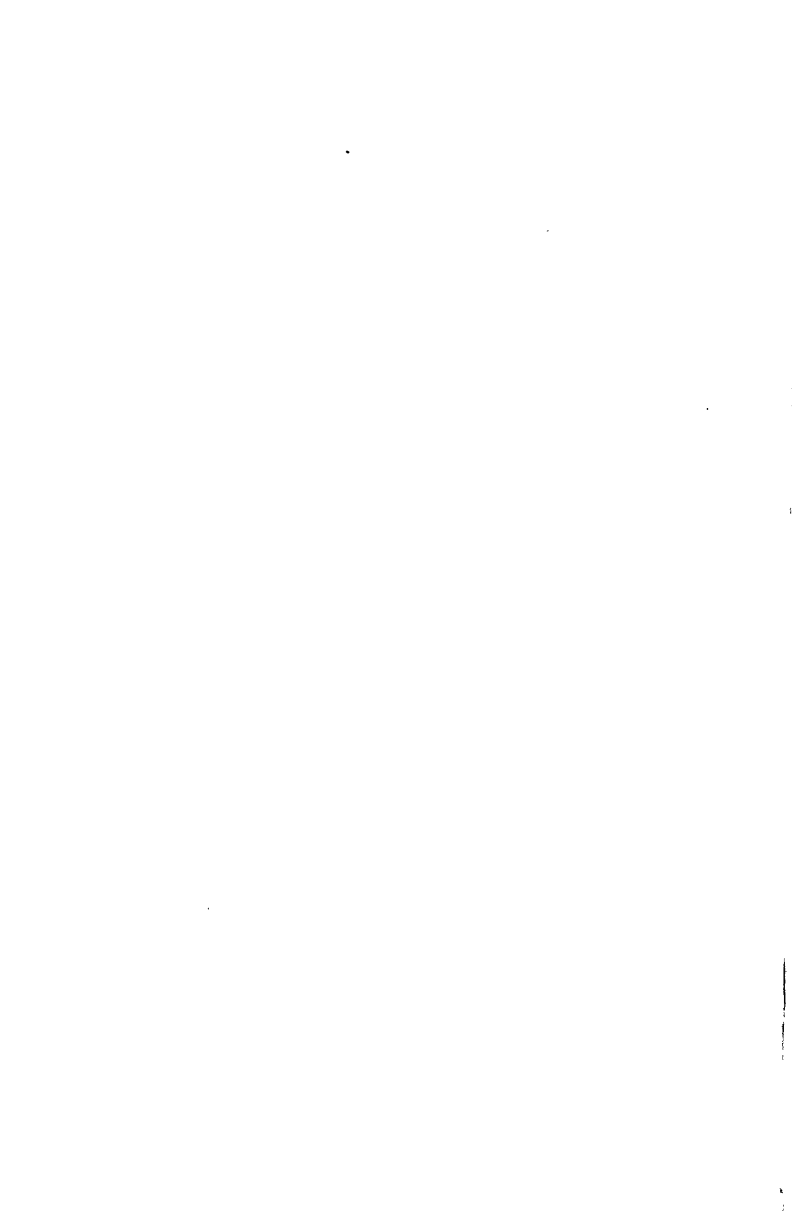
the religion of the day, were yet of truly Hindu origin, just as Christ's were of truly Hebrew origin. In other words, the teaching of Buddha can in nowise be dissociated from the master-currents of ancient Hindu Thought and Belief, any more than Christ's can be from those of ancient Hebrew Thought and Belief. But for the vast intellectual research work of his own Hindu predecessors, Buddha's own contribution to the religious lore of the world, however original and monumental, would not and could not have been made possible. Long before Buddha's time, the dominant philosophy of ancient India was a spiritual idealism of a singularly pure and exalted type, that found its truest expression in the *Upanishads* which, consequently, formed at once the vast seed-beds and prolific breeding-ground of every philosophical system of India of later times. And Buddha's work is, in part at least, an attempt to return to the high level which had been completely won in ages before him and as completely lost in his own times. Here Buddha may once more be compared with Christ, for, like him, Buddha might with equal justification say: 'Think not that I am come to destroy the law, but to fulfil.' But that both Christ and Buddha had been deeply influenced and primarily inspired by the seers and sages who preceded them, can scarcely be questioned. And, to carry the comparison a step further, as Jesus, before he became *the Christ*, was the greatest and wisest and possessed the most original mind among the

Jews of his age, so was Gautama the greatest and wisest and possessed a singularly original mind among the Hindus of his age before he became *the Buddha* and delivered his immortal Message.

A. S. WADIA

'MAGDALA HOUSE,' POONA

November 3, 1937.



THE AGE OF GAUTAMA

'But now we must go back three centuries in our Story of the World to tell of a great teacher who came near to revolutionizing the religious thought and feeling of all Asia. This was Gautama Buddha, who lived in that Memorable Age which began the adolescence of mankind, the Sixth Century B.C.'

H. G. Wells.

CHAPTER I

THE AGE OF GAUTAMA

As in the life of a strong, healthy, intellectually-alive man, so in the history of a sound, well-organized, intellectually-advanced nation, there comes a time when it feels restless and dissatisfied with the prevalent values and ideals of life, with the settled customs and conventions of society, and then it sighs and yearns for something nobler and higher, something more satisfying and soul-filling than what it finds around it. In such a parlous state of moral ferment and mental disquiet was Aryavarta, the land of the ancient Aryas, when Gautama, of the race of Sakya, saw the light of day on its hallowed soil. Gautama was born in a century of national upheavals and intellectual unrest, not only in India but throughout the world then known—the Sixth Century B.C.

The Sixth Century B.C. was indeed one of the most notable and epoch-making in all History. Everywhere men were acquiring a new boldness, and launching out on strange adventures. Everywhere the human mind was waking out of its sleep of ages and becoming introspective and self-questioning, and this eventually led to a

wholesale discrediting of the ancient traditions of kingship and of priestcraft and blood sacrifices. It seemed as if the genus *Homo*, after a prolonged infancy and seemingly endless childhood of twenty thousand years, had suddenly reached the stage of full adolescence. It was in this wonderful century that the first 'wisdom-lovers' of mankind made their appearance on the world-stage. In Greece, for instance, those great philosophers and original thinkers—Parmenides, Empedocles, Thales, Anaximander, and the greatest of them all, Heraclitus, who carried on his speculative inquiries away from the haunts of men and having discovered his Principle of Becoming, went to Ephesus and expounded it to enthusiastic audiences there. Not only in Greece were great philosophers beginning the search of mankind for clear ideas about the Universe and Man's place in the scheme of things, but in Babylon itself Daniel, of the great line of Prophets, was carrying Hebrew Prophecy to heights never before attained by the sons of men. It was at this very time that the Phocaeans were founding Marseilles, Nebuchadnezzar was conquering Jerusalem, Croesus flourishing in Lydia, the Medes storming the walls of Nineveh, and the great Cyrus was preparing to snatch Babylon from Nabonidus, thereby displaying to the wondering world the might and glory of the rising Persian Empire. Contemporaneously with these great men of thought and action, China gave birth to its two immortals, Lao-tze and Confucius, who

advanced the frontiers of human knowledge and left to the world the priceless heritage of their garnered wisdom, and finally India completed this world-wide galaxy of intellectual luminaries by sending up into the firmament its own particular bright star to outshine them all. In a word, in that wonderful Sixth Century B.C., from the Pillars of Hercules to the Confines of Cathay, the cauldron of human thought and beliefs was seething and simmering with ever-rising bubbles of new ideas and strange ambitions. But the cauldron boiled and seethed more intensely in India than in any other part of the world. The unrest in India not only revolutionized the entire religious thought and beliefs of Asia, but left an impress on the history of the moral evolution of mankind deeper and more lasting than that made by any other country.

What was this mental unrest in India due to? It was due to the same cause that has been so repeatedly manifested in the course of the world's history and evolution—the old inherited modes and traditions lagging behind and failing to keep up with and be incorporated with the ideas and ambitions of the newer times. In other words, the old modes and traditions had got scaly and so hardened that it was impossible for the newer ideas and ambitions of the age to filter through the thick layers of their encrusted surface.

How very few men there are in the world who have—the Courage to Think! Men habitually

live with the dark hand of the past upon them, and look into the grave of the dead and buried for their inspiration and teaching, and are too lazy or too fearful to go outside the settled groove of things, or blaze a new trail and find things out for themselves. To trace the history of the great revolution which India underwent in her ideas and outlook on life in Gautama's day, we shall have to go back a full century before his time. But here we come face to face with a strange difficulty. The difficulty arises from the fact that *India has no real history before the Mohammedan invasion of the thirteenth century*. The absence of any historical record is the more striking because India possessed an oral, and later, a written, literature equal to that of any other nation, before the invention of printing. The *Vedas*, with their *Upanishads* and *Brahmanas*, and the commentaries on them, form in themselves a literature of vast extent and some parts are as old, possibly older, than any written work now known to exist. The *Puranas*, though comparatively modern, make up a body of doctrine, mixed with mythology and tradition, such as few nations can boast of. Also, there are extant two epics which, in length and literary merit, surpass those of any other ancient nation, and a drama of great beauty, written at periods extending through a long series of years. In addition to these we have treatises on law and medicine; on dancing and dramatic art, on astronomy and architecture, on mathematics and metaphysics, and on almost

every conceivable branch of mental science—a literature extending, in fact, to some ten thousand works—but in all this rich literary and scientific heritage there is not one book that can be called truly *historical*. No man in India, one might say without any exaggeration, ever thought of recording the events of his own life or of repeating the previous experiences of others, and it was not until after the Christian Era that any one thought of establishing eras from which to date deeds or mark events.

Leaving this period, which must for our purpose be considered prehistoric, we tread on surer ground as we approach the century when Buddha was born. It was about 700 B.C. that men of advanced thought and creative vision first gave indications that they were not satisfied with, and would no longer tamely submit to, the empty rites and wearisome ceremonialism of the sacred Brahmana lore. The gods of the Rig-Veda, whom ancient Rishis had invoked so lovingly and worshipped so fervently, had come to be regarded by these inquiring minds as merely awe-inspiring names invented by the priests and pundits to strike terror into the hearts of the ignorant and superstitious in order to secure submission to their own self-motivated designs. In the minds of the advanced thinkers *Vishnu* and *Varuna* raised no distinct ideas, nor *Indra* and *Ushas* any grateful emotions. On the contrary, the inquisitive among them began to probe on their own initiative into the mysteries of death and human

destiny, and the most venturesome even took to inquiring into the origin and nature of Brahma Himself.

After all, few could devote their life to abstruse speculations or apply their energy to solving recondite problems of life. The mass of Aryan householders contented themselves with submitting tamely and unquestioningly to their Brahmin priests and doing what they bid them. This powerful hereditary caste of Brahmins had developed in the course of time into an organized intellectual force which acquired for itself the leading position not only in religious matters but also in the affairs of state which previously were in the hands of the Kshatriyas. Under the guise of conserving the spiritual values and ministering to the spiritual needs of the community at large, the Brahmins established a kind of ecclesiastical oligarchy and studiously kept idolatry and every form of superstitious belief alive to facilitate their unscrupulous exactions from the laity. They ascribed a magical power to certain words intoned in a certain way and exalted Sarasvati, the goddess of learning, as the *sakti* or active spirit of Brahma the Creator. Later they developed this idea into the philosophical concept of the *mantram*, as the first knowable cause of the whole Creation itself. The *mantram*—a Sanskrit formula composed of a certain sequence of sounds and rhythm—was said to control etheric vibrations and produce certain subjective effects, beneficial or otherwise, to the persons or objects concerned.

Certain *mantrams* could assure victory and prosperity to a state or an individual, and certain others could compass the defeat and destruction of their enemies. In short, the Brahmins maintained that the *mantram* embodied within itself the dynamic principle of the Universe which could affect for better or for worse every single concern of our daily life.

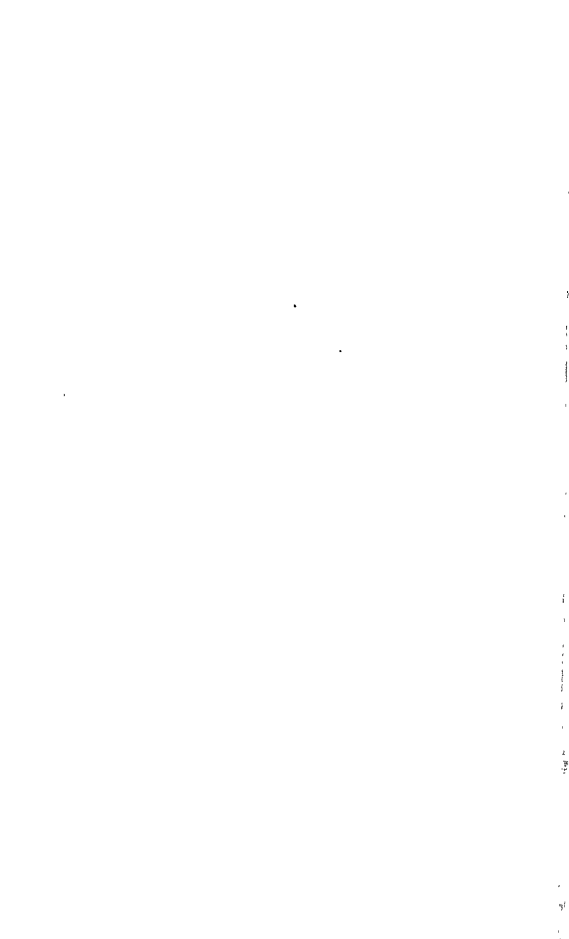
Another instrument of Brahminical tyranny and deception was the Aryan belief in the divine power of sacrifice, which had come down from the earliest Vedic times. In the course of many centuries the performance of sacrificial rites had grown into a fine art, which the Brahmins were not slow to exploit for their own personal advantage. Like the *mantram*, the application of Vedic sacrificial ritual was extended by them to every concern of public and private life.

Another superstition which the Brahmins sedulously nurtured was the age-long belief of the East, which may be summed up in two words—*Asceticism Purifies*. This slogan was heard everywhere, and began to obsess the mind, till it eventually dominated the whole religious life of India. *No Salvation without mortification* was a fixed postulate, an essential principle in the spiritual life and lore of the country. Hence developed that dubious theory of *tapas* or self-imposed mortification of the flesh by the practice of which the masses were led to believe the Brahmins acquired divine grace, accompanied by spiritual insight and command over the forces of nature. Sitting

in the midst of five fires or upon an ant-heap in the forest, standing upon one leg and holding the hand straight above the head until the muscles of the arm atrophied, and starving on a carefully graduated system, were some of the *tapasic* means adopted by Brahmins for the subjugation of the senses to acquire favour with Brahma. The belief was that if such self-mortifying practices were pursued daily and carried eventually to the furthest extreme of human endurance, the Brahmins must come to possess superhuman powers and compel the hidden forces of nature to yield in obedience to their will.

Such was the state of things in India in the sixth century before Christ. Religion, in its true sense, had been replaced by superstition and ceremonialism, which had in many cases degenerated into vicious practice and rank iniquity. The Brahmins, once the guardians of ancient wisdom and Vedic religious lore, had likewise degenerated into an exclusive sect, a priesthood grasping and unscrupulous, ignorant and pretentious. Add to this the growing unhealthy distinctions of Caste which disfigured the ancient social laws of Vedic times and you have the stage set and ready for a great revolutionary drama, needing only a *dramatis personae* of the requisite intellectual stature and dynamic will to take the lead and set the piece going on the boards. To put it in the words of the Sage of Chelsea, in the sixth century before Christ, there was all over Hindustan enough dry, dead fuel of sheer help-

lessness and unvoiced discontent, needing only a spark or a lightning flash from heaven to kindle it into a roaring flame, consuming on the spot every kind of intellectual dross and moral filth that had been accumulating for centuries in the hoary land of the ancient Aryas.



THE ADVENT OF GAUTAMA

'I liken common languid times, with their unbelief, distress, perplexity to dry, dead fuel, waiting for the lightning out of Heaven that shall kindle it. . . . In all epochs of the world's history, we shall find the Great Man to have been an indispensable saviour of his epoch; the lightning, without which the fuel never would have burnt. The History of the World is the biography of Great Men.'

Carlyle.

CHAPTER II

THE ADVENT OF GAUTAMA

As ever, the Hour brings the Man. So in the hour of Aryavarta's greatest need, a man of dynamic personality and unclouded vision, of moral vigour and inflexible purpose, was sent down to take up the cause of her oppressed millions and revive her past glory by giving a new and nobler turn to her ancient ideals, a fresh and unfaltering impetus to the old moral forces and traditions then rapidly dying out. Usually a man of this type rises from among the people, but in this instance an heir to the most renowned kingdom in the land was selected.

There seems very little reason for doubting that Gautama was born in or about the year 563 B.C. and died in 483 B.C. at the age of eighty years. Immense progress has been made during the last thirty or forty years in the research of the origin of Buddhism, and in communicating the knowledge so gained to the world at large. Much, however, remains to be done before the story is complete and divested of all the complexities and absurdities which enthusiastic commentators have heaped upon it. Still, the leading events in the life of the founder of the religion are simple, and

sufficiently well ascertained to depend on for all practical purposes.

The founder of Buddhism was one of the last of a long line of kings, known as the Solar dynasty, who, from a period shortly after the advent of the Aryans into India, had held supreme sway in Ayodhya—the modern Oude. About the twelfth or thirteenth century before Christ they were superseded by another Aryan race of much less pure blood, known as the Lunar Race, which transferred the seat of power to capitals situated in the northern parts of the Doab. In consequence, the lineal descendants of the old Solar kings were reduced to a petty principality at the foot of the Himalayas, where our Siddharta was born. As is the case with heirs of royal houses, the prince was brought up amid all the finery and frivolity, luxury and laxity of his father's Court, and was deliberately left ignorant of the strife and struggle, of the sorrow and suffering that prevailed in the outer world. Scarcely had he reached manhood, when he was suitably married to a beautiful princess of a neighbouring royal house, and things went well for a year and a day.

But Prince Siddharta, as Gautama was known then, was by nature serious-minded and introspective. It was therefore evident that he would not for long tolerate without protest the gilded trivialities and demoralizing ease and festivities of the Court life to which he had been subjected during his youth. A chance insight into the

unhappy state of things prevailing outside the guarding palace-walls—coming one day into actual contact with the revealing manifestations of death, disease, and decrepit old age—set to work that youthful mind which was already in the throes of doubt and misgiving. Why were there these ugly things of life, what was their origin, and how could they be overcome? But all his deep thinking and prolonged meditation led nowhere, for he was still safely locked behind the gilded bars of the royal palace prison. In his despair and discontent he saw things in the wrong perspective, and in that depressed and disconsolate state of mind his devoted wife, doting parents, and beautiful home appeared as so many golden *fetters*, binding him hopelessly and relentlessly to a mode of life that had become meaningless and actually hateful to him. But his good-nature and tender-heartedness prevented him from taking the obvious course—namely, getting away at once and for ever from his present emasculating surroundings and making his way in the world by himself. Such a step, he knew, could alone bring peace to his agitated mind and quiet to his troubled spirit. But that would inevitably mean cutting himself off for good from his near and dear ones. The bare thought of doing such a thing repelled him, for it would be certain to hurt the feelings, nay, break the hearts of those he loved best and wished to serve most in life.

Of all the difficult situations in life, there is, for

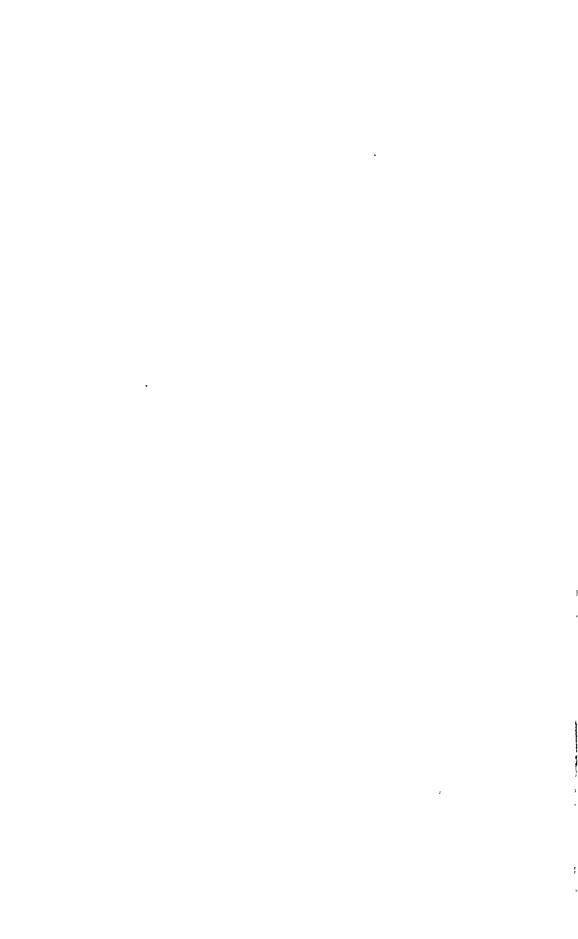
a high-souled man, none comparable to that of having to decide between two equally hateful alternatives, one of which he must perforce choose. In such a situation Siddharta found himself. But he could not make up his mind to choose either of the alternatives, and so through the endless days and sleepless nights he was subjected to that horrible mental torture which comes of divided will and unstable conviction.

It was evident that this state of restless indecision and silent suffering must continue uninterrupted and interminably unless something happened to give a new turn to his life, and fix his divided will irrevocably one way or the other. And something did happen a year after his marriage, which compelled him to come to a final decision. This was the birth of his son. No sooner was the child born than his spirit again became rebellious and his mind pestered with the old obsession of earthly bonds and family fetters, and this to such an extent that when one of the court attendants came running to him to give the glad news that fair Yasodhara had given birth to a son, he, instead of feeling elated and giving expression to his joy at the happy event, as a father and good husband should, blurted out in a piteous tone: 'A bond has come into being; another fetter added to my already heavy ones.' He was not content with merely thinking and speaking of his child as a fetter, but he insisted on naming him as such and so called him *Rahula* or 'bond.'

Whatever additional pain and sorrow the child Rahula all too innocently brought into his father's life, they had one good effect on him. They served to stabilize his wavering will and make him finally decide on one of the two alternatives; this was to cut himself free from all family fetters, no matter what pain and sorrow it might cause his aged father, his dear mother, and his own beloved Yasodhara.

Once having come to a decision, he did not for a moment waver, but carried it out with inflexible determination at the very first opportunity. One night, when all was quiet and the royal household peacefully asleep, he, with his faithful charioteer, Channa, noiselessly stepped out of the royal court-yard and left his home, wife, child, and parents once and for all. But before he left,

 he touched Yasodhara's feet,
And bent the farewell of fond eyes, unutterable,
Upon her sleeping face, still wet with tears;
And thrice around the bed in reverence,
As though it were an altar, softly stepped
With clasped hands laid upon his beating heart,
'For never,' he spake, 'lie I there again!'
And thrice he made to go, but thrice came back,
So strong her beauty was, so large his love;
Then, o'er his head drawing his cloth, he turned
. . . and into the night Siddharta passed—
To seek Deliverance and that Unknown Light.



THE SEARCH OF GAUTAMA

'Man is ever a Seeker. Many men before Gautama had found life distressing and mysterious; consequently, they spent much of their time in meditation and in self-mortifying practices. These ascetics were all supposed *to be seeking some deeper truth and reality in life.* A passionate desire to do likewise took possession of Gautama and his *Search* commenced.'

Annie Besant.

CHAPTER III

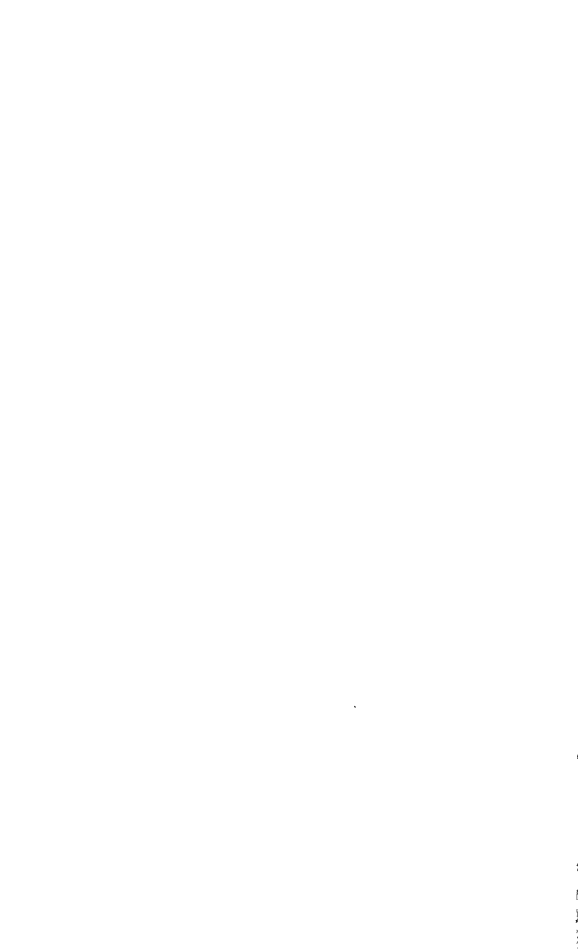
THE SEARCH OF GAUTAMA

WITH the leaving of his home, wife, and child that fateful midnight, commenced the Search of Gautama. The search for the solution of the eternal problems of the Purposes of Existence, and the Mystery of Pain and Sorrow, which for ever have weighed down the spirit and worn out the body of those rare Silent Souls who cannot bring themselves to walk in empty formulas nor dwell in the show of things. He wanted to know, as all those great Silent Souls before and since have always wanted to know: What was he? Whence had he come? Why had he come? And Whither was he bound? But, above all, he wanted to know—ever since he had seen and pondered over death, disease, and decrepit old age, he had wanted to know—why was Pain (*dukkha*) created and how was it to be overcome?

After sending back his faithful Channa, Gautama first went to the mango-grove of Anupiyā, and from there to certain hermits who were practising many and strange penances for the sake of securing 'Happiness through Pain.' But seeing no solution to his own problem of *dukkha* in their creed and practices of life, he made his way to the hermitage of the renowned sage

Alara Kalama, and became his disciple and learnt and passed through the successive stages of Ecstatic Meditation. But, here again, not being satisfied with the great sage's nihilistic solution of life's problem, he left his hermitage and repaired to the village of Uruvela, and there on the sacred banks of the Nairanjana, he abode, practising *tapas* for six long years in the company of five other ascetics. It will be remembered that the Brahmins of old believed that one of the surest ways of acquiring spiritual insight and enlightenment was the practice of *tapas* or self-subjugation through mortification of the flesh. Gautama, who had now become Bodhisatta or seeker after wisdom, was determined that he would not leave the banks of the Nairanjana until he had solved, by long *tapas*, the Mystery of Human Suffering. Once he had taken this resolution, he so rigidly and so systematically practised the great tapasic rules of systematic fasting, long meditative vigils, and severe bodily mortifications, that he wasted away little by little until, at the end of the six years, he was a mere shadow of his former robust self. As it is picturesquely put in the Buddhist lore, he gradually reduced his life sustenance to such an extent that he eventually brought himself to live 'on a single sesamum seed with but one grain of rice each day.' It is evident that such prolonged austerities, sapping bodily strength by a graduated system of starvation, must eventually end in complete physical breakdown. And so it happened. One morning, as

the Bodhisatta was returning from the river-bank after his daily ablutions, his steps suddenly became unsteady, he tottered, and fell down in a swoon. When he came to, it was a different Gautama who sat up and looked around. As he had lain apparently unconscious, a sudden revulsion of thought and feeling had taken possession of his soul, and in a flash of intuition he had realized that the Road to Enlightenment and Emancipation could never lie along the way he had been going during those six long years; that if his mind was to work efficiently, his physical strength would have to be maintained by adequate nourishment of his body. Like all great men, once he had found out his mistake he did not for a moment hesitate to correct it. He therefore took up his begging-bowl once more and went on his daily round of the villages, collecting, as of old, rice and pulse to sustain him through the day.



THE GREAT ILLUMINATION

'The Bodhisatta sank into ever deeper and deeper thought that Night of Enlightenment, till he attained the following day *the Great Illumination.*'

Coomaraswamy.

CHAPTER IV

THE GREAT ILLUMINATION

GAUTAMA was approaching his thirty-fifth year when the supreme moment of his life came. A phase of the mental disquiet and spiritual travail to which he was subject periodically, once again took possession of his soul as he was resting one afternoon beside a stream in a grove of sal-trees in Uruvela. That evening he betook himself to the foot of a beautifully grown *peepul*-tree and there, clearing a little space for himself, sat cross-legged in the mystic posture of *padmasana* with his face turned to the East, and made the great resolution of his life; that, come what might, he would not leave or even stir from his seat until the great illumination for which he had panted and yearned, struggled and striven for the best years of his growing manhood, was granted to him.

There, under the shade of that tree of wisdom, sat Gautama the Bodhisatta day and night immersed in deep thought; meditating on the great problem of Human Suffering till, on the seventh day, when the sun was high up in the heavens, shining in all the brilliance of its noontide glory, came at last, as if in a stream of dazzling light, the Great Illumination. Instantly the Bodhisatta perceived the complete Chain of Causation,

thereby knowing what *Dukkha* is, its origin, its state of cessation, and the method of bringing about that state of cessation and attaining emancipation. A song of triumphant joy and bliss broke from his lips:

Through many divers births I passed
Seeking in vain the Builder of the House.
But, O Framers of Houses, thou art found out,
Never again shalt thou fashion a house for me!
Broken are all thy beams,
The king-post shattered!
My mind has passed into the stillness of *Nibbana*,
The Ending of Desire has been attained at last.

GAUTAMA THE BUDDHA

'He saw the mistaken ways of the faiths that then obtained, he discerned the sources whence earthly Suffering flowed. With the discernment of these grand truths and their realization in life the Bodhisatta became enlightened: he thus attained *sambodhi* and became a Buddha.'

Narasu.

CHAPTER V

GAUTAMA THE BUDDHA

WITH the coming of the Great Illumination at the end of his seven days' vigil, unbroken fast, and profound meditation, Gautama passed out of the stage of *Bodhisatta* the Seeker into *Buddha* the Enlightened. With the advent of the Enlightenment again, the periodic travail and turmoil of Gautama's soul might truly be said to have been finally stilled. The reader who is conversant with the strenuous career of the Exalted One in the remaining forty-five years of his life will hesitate to admit the validity of this last statement of mine and may maintain, on the contrary, that the most anxious and vexatious period of Buddha's life did not really commence till after that most memorable event of his whole existence.

Such a view, I admit, is not untrue; and I would have no hesitation in accepting the reader's contention in the matter, were we discussing the life and career of an individual of brilliant parts and exalted character, or even of a man of extraordinary talents and rare attainments. But, Gautama, truly speaking, was neither. Though sternly practical and matter-of-fact, and eminently reasonable and unsentimental,

Gautama was at heart a man of dreams and ideals. With such men the tug and strain of existence comes not from the world without but from the world within them. The battle of their life is the desperate fight they have to put up at certain stages of their spiritual evolution, not with the men around them, but with the demons of doubt, distrust, despair, and disorder within them. Once these devastating and demoralizing demons are laid low, and the soul has regained its bearings, it faces with comparative equanimity the neglect and opposition of the great outer world. The reason is that the slow, silent forces unchained from the abysmal depths of a single superior human being, no matter how neglected and nullified at first, must unfailingly work their own sure way through the chequered passage of time, and come eventually to rule the mind and guide the impulse of humanity at large. I believe, therefore, the really trying period of Gautama's existence, during which he underwent the most crucial test of his life, was that which preceded the advent of the Great Illumination. Having stood that crucial test successfully, the way ahead lay clear to him—beset though it was with pitfalls and obstacles formidable enough to have dismayed and dejected the stoutest of hearts lacking as complete and unwavering a faith in its mission as Buddha had in his.

The Illumination granted to him formed, however, a substantial foundation for the building up of the immense superstructure of his future

messianic career. For one thing, it taught him that the *fons et origo* of all human trouble was partly Nature and partly Man. On the part of nature it was *Dukkha* or Pain; on the part of man it was *Tanha* or Desire. But for the active co-operation of *tanha*, *dukkha* by itself was powerless to affect human destiny one way or the other. Consequently, the end of human endeavour should be the complete liberation of one's own ego or personality from the fell grip and perpetual bondage of *Tanha*, desire and craving of every description, and the goal of human ambition should be to utilize the disciplined energy thus liberated and purified for the eventual and complete emancipation of one's own fellow-men from the equally fell grip and perpetual bondage of *Dukkha*, pain and sorrow of every kind.



THE MISSION OF BUDDHA

'Then he considered to whom he should first reveal the Truth, and he remembered the Five Wanderers who had been his disciples, and he resolved to go to them. With this resolution began *the Mission of Buddha.*'

Coomaraswamy.

CHAPTER VI

THE MISSION OF BUDDHA

ACCORDING to Buddhist traditions, the Enlightened One remained in the Grove of Uruvela for six weeks more, taking full count of and carefully collating and consolidating the rich store of wisdom and enlightenment granted to him. He then settled his plan of campaign for the great evangelic work that lay before him. If one were to put faith in the imaginative realism of Chuang Tzu, the renowned Chinese scholar, thoughts such as these passed through the mind of Buddha:

Great truths do not take hold of the hearts of the masses. The whole world is on the wrong track. I know the True Path of Life. But how am I to bring the reluctant masses to see the True Path? I know I cannot succeed. And to try to achieve success by the forcible driving of the masses on the Path of Truth and enlightenment is to commit yet another and greater error. Better to desist and strive no more! But if I desist and strive not, who will strive? So I must strive, even though I may court inevitable failure thereby.

But such cogitations, leading to indecision and inaction, were now of rare occurrence. One bright moonlit evening, however, he came to final decision, and early the next morning he started on his great evangelical mission. Remembering

the Five Ascetics who were partly his pupils and in whose company he had spent six years practising *tapas* he immediately went to them. He was told they were then living in the Deer Park at Isipatana in Benares. He knew that if his new ideas and novel message had a chance of getting a sympathetic hearing from any group of men it was from these Five Wanderers, who were once virtually his disciples and so had some interest in his life, some faith in his teaching. He, therefore, wended his way to the small brotherhood at Isipatana, and there, in that beautifully laid-out and finely timbered Park with deer grazing or resting unafraid around him, he began his momentous mission to mankind, by preaching his First Sermon on 'Setting in Motion the Wheel of the Law,' which, according to Buddhist traditions, laid the Foundation of the Kingdom of Righteousness. Saith the Master:

There are two extremes which he who has gone forth ought *not* to allow. One extreme is—habitual devotion to the passions, to the pleasures of sensual things, a low and heathenish way of seeking satisfaction, ignoble, unprofitable, fit only for the worldly-minded. The other extreme is—habitual devotion to self-mortification, which is also painful, ignoble, and unprofitable. There is the Middle Path discovered by the Tathagata¹—a path which opens the eye, bestows understanding and eventually leads to Peace, to Insight, to Higher Wisdom, to *Nibbana*. Verily, it is this Ariyan Eightfold Path.

¹ This was the name always used by the Buddha when speaking of himself. He never called himself *the Buddha*, nor did his disciples address him as such, but always as *Tathagata*, one who has attained complete realization.

Now this is the Noble Truth as to *Dukkha*. Birth is attended with *dukkha*, decay is *dukkha*, disease is *dukkha*, death is *dukkha*. Union with the unpleasant is *dukkha*, separation from the pleasant is *dukkha*, and any craving unsatisfied—that, too, is *dukkha*. In brief, the five aggregates of clinging which constitute individuality are *dukkha*.

Now this is the Noble Truth as to the Origin of *Dukkha*. Verily, it is *Tanha*, the craving thirst that causes the renewal of becomings, that is accompanied by sensual delights, and seeks satisfaction, now here, now there—that is to say, the craving for the gratification of the senses, or the craving for prosperity.

Now this is the Noble Truth as to the way that leads to the passing away of *Dukkha*. Verily, it is the Ariyan Eightfold Path, that is to say, Right Views, Right Aspirations, Right Speech, Right Conduct, Right Mode of Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Rapture.

With this sermon as his foundation the Master, in the remaining forty-five years of his life, raised his monumental superstructure of the Buddhist Philosophy of Existence. Once the foundation was well and truly laid, he erected two corner-stones, strong enough to bear the stress and strain of the soaring edifice he had in mind to erect. These two corner-stones were the two Sermons he delivered shortly after the first. The earlier of these two is called *On the Non-Existence of Soul*, of which the substance is as follows:

The body, O Bhikkhus, cannot be the eternal soul, for it is destined to extinction. Nor do sensation, perception, the predispositions, and consciousness together constitute the eternal soul; were it so, then the consciousness would not tend, as it actually does, towards

disintegration. Or how think you, whether is form permanent or transitory? and whether are sensation, perception, and the predispositions and consciousness permanent or transitory? 'They are transitory,' replied the disciples. And that which is transitory, is it evil or good? 'It is evil,' replied the disciples. And that which is transitory, evil, and liable to change, can it be said that 'this is mine, this am I, this is my eternal soul'? 'Nay, verily, it cannot be said,' replied the disciples. Then, O Bhikkhus, it must be said of all physical form whatsoever, past or present or to be, subjective or objective, far or near, high or low, that 'This is not mine, this am I not, this is not my eternal soul.' And in like manner of all sensations, perceptions, predispositions and consciousness, it must be said, 'These are not mine, these am I not, these are not my eternal soul.' And perceiving this, O Bhikkhus, the true disciple will conceive a disgust for physical form, and for sensation, perception, the predispositions, and consciousness, and so will be divested of desire; and thereby he is freed, and becomes aware that he is freed; and he knows that Becoming is exhausted, that he has lived the pure life, that he has done what it behoved him to do, and that he has put off mortality for ever.

After delivering the Second Sermon, the Master went to Uruvela and there, seated on the Gaya Scarp, he preached the Third Sermon, called *The Discourse on Fire*:

All things, O Bhikkhus, are on fire. And what, O Bhikkhus, are all these things that are on fire? The eye is on fire, forms are on fire, eye-consciousness is on fire, impressions received by the eye are on fire; and whatever sensation—pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral—originates in the impressions received by the eye, is likewise on fire. And with what are all these on fire? I say with the fire of lust, of resentment, and the fire of glamour (*rāga*, *dosa*, *moha*); with birth, old age, death, lamentation,

misery, grief, and despair they are afire. And so with the ear, the nose, the tongue, and the touch. The mind, too, is on fire, thoughts are on fire; and mind-consciousness, and the impressions received by the mind, and the sensations that arise from the impressions that the mind receives, these, too, are on fire. And with what are they on fire? I say with the fire of lust, of resentment, and of glamour; with birth, old age, death, sorrow, lamentation, misery, and grief and despair, they are afire. And seeing this, O Bhikkhus, the true disciple conceives disgust for the eye, for forms, for eye-consciousness, for impressions received by the eye and for the sensations arising therein; and for the ear, the nose, the tongue, and the sense of touch, and for the mind, and for thoughts and mind-consciousness, impressions, and sensations. And so he is divested of desire, and thereby he is freed, and is aware that he is freed, and he knows that Becoming is exhausted, that he has lived the pure life, that he has done what it behoved him to do, and that he has put off mortality for ever.

The fame of these three sermons spread so far and wide among the intelligentia of Benares and the neighbouring villages that it is said thousands made their way to Isipatana to hear the Master and, of the assembled crowds, a thousand were so impressed by the last of the discourses that they renounced on the spot their attachment to worldly pursuits and desires of life, and became sworn *Bhikkhus* of the Path of Enlightenment.

Attended by this batch of a thousand disciples with their leader, Uruvela Kassapa, the Enlightened One made his way to the Palm Grove near Rajagaha to fulfil a promise he had made to its ruler, Bimbisara. In Rajagaha he proclaimed

for the first time the Four Noble Truths; and it was there that the venerable Arahāt Assaji met the Master, became his devoted pupil, and composed that famous verse, which enunciates the fundamental doctrine of Buddhism regarding the law of universal causation:

What things soever are produced from causes,
Of these the Buddha hath revealed the Cause,
And likewise how they cease to be:
'Tis this the Great Adept proclaims.

Assaji's verse is often called the Buddhist Declaration of Faith, and it is the text that is found engraved more frequently than any other on ancient Buddhist monuments.

While at Rajagaha, the Master received an invitation from his father. So he made his way to Kapilavatthu with his band of Arahats, which by then numbered twenty thousand, and there chose the Nigrodha Grove for his resting-place. Here, after converting his father Suddhodana, his son Rahula, his cousin Ananda, and several other Sakya princes, he went back to Rajagaha and stayed in the Sita Grove.

It was when the Master was passing his fifth rainy season in the great forest near Vesali that the dispute between the Sakyas and Kohyas, regarding the distribution of the water of the Rohini, arose: but for his intervention the dispute would have ended in a general fight and the loss of human lives. It was about this time that the Enlightened One gave his consent to the admission of women into the Buddhist fold.

From the fifth to the fourteenth year of his evangelical work the Master met with more opposition than at any other period of his life. It was during this period that the memorable incident of Brahman Bharadvaja happened. Bharadvaja, who was superintending the cultivation of his fields, seeing the Enlightened One begging and living on the alms and charities of others, sarcastically questioned him: 'O Wanderer, dost thou plough and sow for thy livelihood even as I do for mine?' 'Yes, Bharadvaja, even I plough and sow for my living just as much as thou dost for thine,' replied the Master unruffled. 'But, Reverend Sir, thou hast not a yoke nor a plough nor a goad, nor a team of bullocks nor even seeds. How then,' asked Bharadvaja surprised, 'canst thou say that thou too plougest and labourest for thy living, just as I do for mine?' Then it was that the Master made the memorable reply: 'Yes, Bharadvaja, I too labour like you, for I also possess a yoke, a ploughshare, a goad, seeds, and a team of bullocks. For faith is the seed I sow, humility is my ploughshaft, the mind is the tie of the yoke, mindfulness is my ploughshare and goad combined. My team of bullocks is the strenuous exertion I put forth to lead my trusting disciples in safety and without backsliding to the place where sorrow is a thing of the past and where freedom from worldly pursuits and pleasures is considered a possession richer than all the wealth of the world.' It is said Bharadvaja was so impressed by the Master's wise words

that he became his pupil there and then and was eventually admitted into the Order.

In this way passed the Enlightened One's life of deep meditation and active evangelism year in and year out. Owing to lack of authentic sources we have no definite knowledge of the Master's movements in the middle and later years of his wandering ministry. Sufficient be it to say that each year there was a period of about nine months of active missionary work and about three of rest and recuperation during the rainy season. But these three months were not passed in the unfruitful indolence of a sylvan retreat. While the body rested and recuperated for the next period of continuous movement and strenuous exertion, the mind was primarily employed, as ever, in meditating on the eternal things of life and then in expanding the rules and regulations of the Sangha, or expounding the principles of the Dhamma to groups of disciples who flocked to him in his forest retreats. The most important headquarters during these wanderings were the capital cities of the Kings of Kosala and Magadha, Savatthi, and Rajagaha. The Sangha possessed parks, 'not too far from, nor yet too near' these capital cities. The parks were well provided with shady groves and quiet retreats, and though away from the noise and bustle of city life were yet easily accessible to all people who wished to take advantage of them. Such a park was the *Veluvana* or Bamboo Grove, once the pleasure-ground of King Bimbisara. Another, still more

famous, was the *Jetavana* at Savatthi, the gift of a wealthy merchant, Mathapindika, who was the Master's great admirer and devoted pupil. Amidst such surroundings Buddha passed his life of strenuous evangelism for wellnigh forty-five years, filling it with creative work of inestimable value to his immediate followers and of lasting good to the world of the future.

When Buddha had reached his seventy-ninth year, he took occasion to assemble the brethren of the Sangha and spoke to them of the forty-one conditions necessary for the welfare of a religious order and expatiated on the duties of a *Bhikkhu*:

So long, O Bhikkhus, as the Brethren delight in a life of solitude; shall not engage in, or be fond of, or be connected with business; shall not cease to strive for Nibbana because they have attained to any lesser thing; shall exercise themselves in mental activity, search after truth, be energetic, joyous, peaceful, and daily employed in earnest meditation; and being assured of the possession of the equanimity of mind, shall ceaselessly strive for the realization of the ideas of the Impermanency of all phenomena, both of the body and of the mind; shall live among the Arahats practising in public and in private, those virtues which are productive of freedom and are untarnished by desire of a future life or by vain belief in the efficacy of outward acts—so long, O Bhikkhus, may the Brethren consider themselves well set on the Path of Enlightenment and Emancipation and away from the Path of Ignorance and Servitude.

Soon after delivering the above discourse, the Master went to Vesali. Here an incident happened which displayed his wonderful broad-mindedness and his complete freedom from the

settled prejudices and inhibitions of conventional society. If there was one trait of the Master which more than any other lent distinction to him throughout his long messianic career, it was his inflexible sense of rectitude and stern moral integrity, and nothing did he more insistently demand of his disciples than a strict and unrelaxing control over their sex instincts and erotic impulses. And yet this great exemplar and exponent of chastity and moral rectitude readily accepted for himself and for all his pupils the friendship and hospitality of a beautiful and wealthy courtesan, named Ambapali. While partaking of the sumptuous feast which she had prepared for them, the Master discoursed on several religious subjects. Ambapali was so moved by his words that she immediately handed over to him for the use of his Order, her beautiful Park with its magnificent mansion, which had taken years to build and furnish. What is more, the Master accepted gladly and thankfully, the 'tainted gift' of Ambapali. Many virtuous disciples of his felt puzzled, nay, scandalized at this ready acceptance by the Master of such a gift from such a woman. And well they might. For somehow it does not seem right to us that a man of Buddha's lofty idealism should be found associating with the fair incarnation of vice and moral turpitude. But there was something truly magical about the personality of the blessed Master. It was said of him that his mere presence brought peace to souls in anguish

and that those who touched his hands or garments momentarily forgot their pain; that evil passions fled at his approach and men whose dull unimaginative lives had been a mode of death arose, as it were, from their living graves when he passed by and called them away from a life of worldly pursuits and pleasures to one of nobler ambitions and disciplined passions.

Buddha is not a solitary instance in history of a prophet and saviour of men freely associating with men and women condemned of society and shunned by all, and reclaiming them from the morass of vice and immorality in which he found them. [That great emblem of purity and righteousness, love and charity, Jesus Christ, did likewise when, as he sat at meat in the house of Matthew, publicans and sinners came and sat down beside him and supped and talked with him in unrestrained freedom as if they were supping and talking with one of their own kind and character.

And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?

But when Jesus heard *that*, he said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.

But go ye and learn what *that* meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.' ¹

From Vesali the Master went to the neighbouring village of Beluva, where he spent his last

¹ Matthew ix. 11, 12, 13.

Retreat. There he was suddenly taken ill and Ananda, fearing that he would be taken away from them, expressed the hope that 'the Exalted One will not pass away until at least he has left instructions to the Order about its regulation after he is gone.' Then the Master made the famous reply which shall live in the history of human thought even though Buddhism, like all human institutions, one day passes away:

What further instructions the Order can expect of me, Ananda, I fail to understand. In all my teachings I have made no distinction between esoteric and exoteric doctrine. The Tathagata, as you, Ananda, are well aware, knows no such thing as the closed fist of a teacher, who keeps back some truths as above the intelligence of ordinary men and women. What further instructions, then, can I have to leave to the Order, Ananda? I, O Ananda, have reached my sum of days. I am now eighty years of age. Just as a worn-out cart can be kept going only by means of props and patches, so methinks the body of the Tathagata can only be kept erect by splints and bandages. My journey is drawing to its close. *Therefore, O Ananda, be ye lamps unto yourselves. Be ye places of refuge to yourselves. Betake yourselves to no external refuge. Hold fast to the Truth as a lamp. Hold fast as a refuge to the Truth. Look not for refuge to any one except yourselves. And whosoever, Ananda, either now or after I am dead, shall be lamps unto themselves, shall betake themselves to no external refuge, but holding fast to the Truth as their lamp and holding fast to the Truth as their refuge, shall look not for refuge to any one besides themselves—it is they, Ananda, among my Bhikkhus who shall reach the very topmost height! But they must be anxious to learn.*

Never was the whole Doctrine of Individualism of our own times—the philosophy associated with

Whitman and Nietzsche, with Carlyle and Stendhal—anticipated so fully, so correctly and so succinctly, nor expressed with such vigour, truth, and poetry as in these last few pregnant sentences of the Exalted One!

Thereafter the Master proceeded to Para and stayed in the mango-grove of old Cunda, who, being told of the Master's arrival, hastened to the grove and invited him and his brethren to dine with him on the following day. Accordingly, the Exalted One at the appointed hour took his bowl and proceeded with all his disciples to the house of Cunda and there partook of the meal of 'rice and cake and a dish of pork,' prepared especially for him. The last item on the menu, as might be expected, is disputed by certain Buddhist authorities. At all events, there was something in the feast prepared that did not agree with the Master and he consequently suffered acute pain in the stomach. He bore up without a word of complaint, however, and later went to Kusinara, and from there finally to the sala-grove of the Mallas on the further side of the river Hiranyavati. And when they reached there, seeing two sala-trees standing straight and erect he asked Ananda to prepare between them a couch of intertwining twigs covered with leaves, and then in a low, weary tone said: 'I am tired, Ananda, and feel so very exhausted that fain would I lie down here for ever and ever.' The faithful Ananda immediately prepared the couch as the Exalted One had wished, and helped him to lay himself

down on his right side with one leg resting on the other.

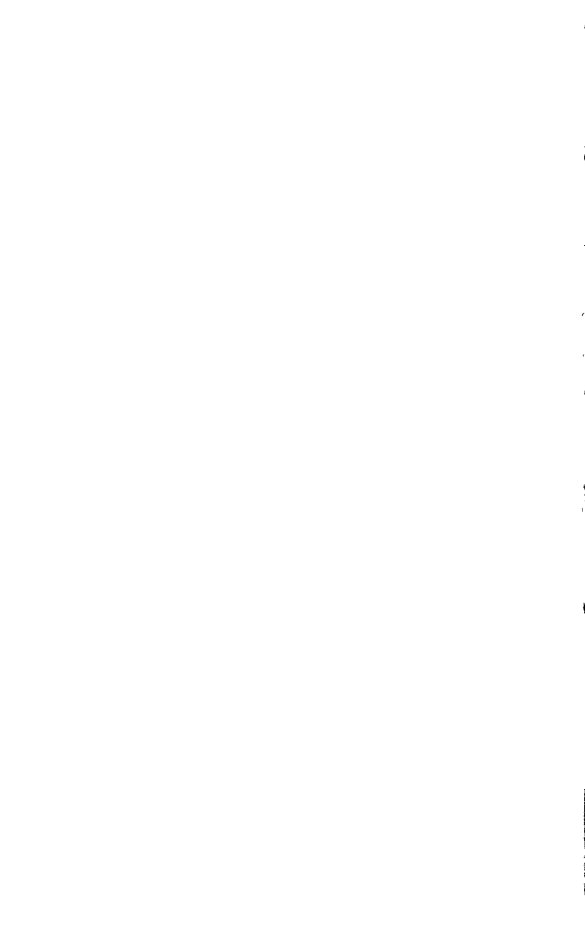
It did not take long for Ananda to perceive that the Master was really lying on his death-bed, that he would soon pass into his last long sleep. Being by nature of gentle disposition, the thought of losing his beloved Master made Ananda restless and grief-stricken. The Master, noticing him in tears, enjoined him to pull himself together. 'Enough, Ananda,' said he, 'do not let yourself be troubled; do not weep! Have I not already, on former occasions, told you that it is in the very nature of all things to decay and die and that we must be prepared to sever ourselves from those most near and dear to us? How, then, Ananda, can this that thou wishest be possible?

'Anything, whatever born, brought into being and organized, contains within itself the principle of dissolution. How can it be possible then that any such thing should not be ultimately dissolved? No such miracle could ever happen. For a long time, Ananda, you have been very near and dear to me by acts of love that never varied and are beyond all calculation. You have done well, Ananda! Be earnest in effort, and you too shall be free from the intoxications of the senses, of egoism, delusion, and ignorance.'

Ananda, perceiving that the Exalted One was now at the end of his strength, beseeched those assembled not to disturb him, but to leave him alone. The Master overheard what Ananda said, and so, turning his face to the assembled disciples,

addressed them: 'Brethren, it may be that there is doubt or misgiving in the mind of a Brother as to the Buddha or the Dhamma, or the Marga. Inquire freely of me, therefore, Brethren. Do not hesitate and then reproach yourselves with this thought: "Our teacher was face to face with us, and we could not bring ourselves to inquire of the Tathagata when we were face to face with him."' When none of the brethren ventured to address him, the Master spoke: 'The Tathagata now knows for certain that in the whole assembly of the Order, there is not one Brother who has any doubt or misgiving about the truth of the Buddha, or the Dhamma, or the Marga!' Then, raising himself a little, he gave in his usual resonant voice this final injunction to his assembled disciples: 'Decay and disintegration are inherent in all compound things! Work out your Deliverance with patient diligence.'

These were the very last words that fell from the Master's lips. He then opened his eyes, turned them in a gentle sweep as if bidding a silent good-bye to each Brother individually, and with a faint smile still hovering on his lips, lay down, turned over to his right, and fell into a gentle sleep from which he awoke no more.



THE NOBLE SILENCE .

‘There is nothing in the History of Human Thought
more dramatic than—*the Silence of Buddha.*’

Edmond Holmes.

CHAPTER VII

THE NOBLE SILENCE

EVERY other great religion of the world takes for granted the Existence of God, and then inquires into His nature and attributes. Buddhism is the one exception to this prevailing rule. Throughout his evangelical career, Buddha maintained a *Noble Silence* on the subject. And one would say it was not only a *noble* but a *wise* silence, for of all human speculations there is not one more futile than that into the nature and attributes of the Creator.

Once, when two famous sages, Sariputta and Kassapa, were discussing Buddha's teaching, the first asked: 'Does the Tathagata exist beyond death?' 'That,' replied Kassapa, 'is one of the things he deliberately left undeclared.' When asked why such a vital problem affecting mankind at all times was purposely left undiscussed and unsolved Kassapa made the following memorable reply:

These questions are unprofitable. They are not concerned with the first principles of the holy life. They are accompanied by sorrow, wrangling, and resentment; they end in bitterness of feeling and fever of excitement, conducing neither to the detachment of heart nor freedom from lusts, ill-will, malice, hatred; neither to tranquillity

of spirit, nor to peace of mind, nor to wisdom of life, nor to the insight of the higher stages of the Path of Perfection, nor to Arahatship, nor to *Nibbana*.

This famous reply of Kassapa is quoted and requoted in all Buddhist scriptures and commentaries, to depict the mind of Buddha on the matter of metaphysical disputations and philosophical speculations and the so-called Ten Indeterminates in particular. Professor Keith, following Professor Radhakrishnan, alleges that the real reason of Buddha's noble silence was his own limited knowledge of all the ultimate problems of existence. If such an accusation had been made in his presence, Buddha would have been the first to admit its truth, for his silence was the deliberate fulfilment of a self-imposed vow—never to divert his time, thought, and energy from the main business of life, to mere arid, unprofitable metaphysical discussions on the Ultimate Realities of Existence. He contended that matters connected with the ultimate phases of things were far too deep and complicated to be grasped by any effort of the limited human intellect, and much too vast and far reaching to be compassed by the highest flights of human imagination. No one in the world, either sage, prophet, or even a Buddha, can tell anything, definitely and irrefutably, about them. Why then, need one puzzle one's brain about problems that in the nature of things cannot be solved? Why indulge in unprofitable disputes and waste precious time? Buddha, especially, had suffered for many years from a deluge of

words and arguments, barren of action and void of result. He had, consequently, come to look upon speculative philosophy and metaphysical discussion as a mere pose and pretentiousness leading nowhere; an intellectual game, clever and subtle, without doubt, but always disguising its lack of reality and pitiful emptiness under the cloak of a phraseology often so involved that it is the despair of any practical-minded man who goes to it with any hope of understanding and profiting by it. Nevertheless, these speculative enterprises of the human mind are inevitable and even necessary if we are not to sink back into barbarism. Nobody dare arrest the march of human ideas nor thwart the Spirit of Inquiry and Adventure! Not even a Buddha, or a hundred Buddhas. It will, in spite of all obstacles and dangers, manifest itself and urge Man on to daring enterprises and seemingly useless explorations. And of all these bolder and apparently profitless metaphysical ventures, the Quest of the Absolute has seized the heart and imagination of man from the first rude awakening of his consciousness, and will, in all probability, continue to draw him in its lure till he stands perfected, having fully and finally realized himself.

It may be at once admitted that all speculative ventures into the *nature and attributes of God* are, as Buddha has truly maintained, a waste of time and energy. Man, with his comparatively limited mind, is incapable of conceiving God. He can but attribute to God a nature similar to his own.

For man can only see himself. Consequently at the best he does but project his own mind and form, his own reason and thought, his own love and sympathy, the best, highest, and noblest that is in him, into his own particular concept of the Deity. The history of religious thought amply bears out this statement. Hence, instead of saying that God is the creator of the world, we might with greater truth and justification say that man has created God—that is, man has created out of his own limited brain his idea of God and the moral attributes of God. The Bible says: 'And God said, let us make man in our image, after our likeness.' It would have been truer had it said: 'And Men said, let us make God in our image, after our likeness.' Xenophanes was right when he said: 'If lions could picture a god, they would picture him in the form of a lion; the horses like a horse; the oxen like an ox.' Hence, the idea of the nature of God springs from one's own mind; and the ethical attributes of God vary with the ethical standards of his worshippers. As man advances to higher stages of morality, his earlier conceptions of the moral character of God no longer satisfy him. Consequently he loses faith in them and creates others to meet the demand of his newer ideals. For instance, the God of Samuel orders the slaughter of infants, but the tender mercies of the God of the Psalmist are over all his creatures. The God of Exodus is merciful only to those who love him, while the Father of Jesus is kind even unto

the evil and the unjust. Thus, not only has the moral concept of God varied at different times with one and the same people, but it has never been the same for any two persons. Temperament and training, heredity and environment are all determinating factors in an individual's idea of God. No wonder Wesley told Whitefield: 'Your God is my Devil,' and yet both proclaimed Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour. It is evident, therefore, that as far as the nature and attributes of God are concerned, we may as well give up the Quest of the Absolute as vain and futile and justly adopt the agnostic attitude, which is also the Buddhistic, saying: 'We do not know and can never come to know' these things.

But the case is quite different when we take up the problem of the Existence of the Deity. Here a practical solution of the problem is possible. A practical solution, I say, with a purpose; for no world problem, worthy of the name, is capable of complete solution, but only of such an elucidation as will lay open to an inquiring mind a part of the mystery in which it is shrouded, or will reasonably satisfy human curiosity and lead to the formation of a definite opinion amounting almost to a conviction. I believe the problem of the Existence of God is capable of such an elucidation as will lead one to form a definite opinion amounting almost to a conviction.

At the very commencement of our inquiry let us give up as hollow and untenable the argument of *ex consensu gentium*, often advanced: 'How is it

possible to deny the existence of God, when most people who have lived on this earth have believed in a god of some sort?' Granting that the existence of God is a matter of universal belief—this fact only advances a strong reason for the assumption that God exists, but does not thereby prove His existence, because many beliefs universally accepted in the past have later been proved, by advancement of knowledge and scientific research, to be erroneous. To take a notorious instance, the universal belief prevailing among men from the very dawn of history till Galileo's time, that the sun went round the earth, has now, as every schoolboy knows, proved to be a pure myth. Even as we give up the argument of universal belief, we shall likewise give up all arguments based on psychological belief in God; or on the so-called historical proofs, or on miracles; or on the view of modern Pragmatism, according to which the truth of a belief does not consist in its agreement with any existing reality, but in its capability of being of practical use to men. Neither shall we take up the arguments of the transcendentalists, nor of the teleologists or the ecstatic intuitionists. We shall not seek shelter in the Platonic Theory of Ideas, that every human concept has a distinct counterpart in reality, since it contains the latter by implication. We shall go to none of these, but try to prove the Existence of God not by the direct way of knowledge and Experience, but by the indirect method of Inference and Deduction which the man of

science invariably adopts in his investigations into the processes of nature.

We have all recently heard of certain scientific investigators and inventors of vivid imagination who have boldly proclaimed that man will one day be able to come into living contact with one of the planets by means of a torpedo ingeniously built and propelled by a series of bursting rockets. Absurd as the belief undoubtedly appears to us at present, let us suppose that in some future century we did actually succeed in inventing such an unbelievable aerial rocket-torpedo; and that it was shot up and, piercing the stratosphere and the dark vacuity beyond, eventually fell in some distant planet, inhabited by some strange types of creatures, possessing a mentality like ours, but on a much lower plane. What thoughts would cross the minds of these creatures on seeing our rocket-torpedo? Perceiving that the torpedo was something entirely different from anything they knew or possessed or could conceive, they would naturally suppose it must have come from some part of the encompassing Universe. In other words, they would be convinced that it was not something that could have produced itself *suo generis* on their own planet, but had a Cause. Again, noticing its ingenious construction, surpassing their own special store of engineering knowledge and mechanical ingenuity, they would come to the conclusion that whatever the agency that constructed it, that agency must possess intellectual

powers of extraordinary capacity. In simple words, the agency must possess a master mind. The most intelligent of the inhabitants would then set their minds and imaginations working to guess what kind of agency it could be that had designed and constructed such a marvellous piece of mechanism. The result of all their long cogitations and profound imaginative speculations would result in the building up of an image of that marvellous agency. And this image, after all, would be only a glorified reflection of their own physical nature and their own mental and moral attributes; so that if those creatures were like centipedes, possessing a hundred facets to their eyes and a hundred feet to their bodies, they would only succeed in building up the image of the constructor of the rocket-torpedo after their own centipedal selves and ideals but on a larger and nobler scale. Such an image would be a hideous travesty, a monstrous perversion of men such as we are. Even so, they would be right in two instances. In the first place, in assigning a Cause, invisible though it was to them, to the production of the rocket-torpedo; and in the second place, in attributing to that Cause a mental capacity of extraordinary reach and depth, far surpassing their own. Similarly should Nature—with her myriad products designed and constructed so much more ingeniously than anything we can produce—excite curiosity in us and set us thinking in the same way as did the inhabitants of that unknown planet on the appearance of our

rocket-torpedo, then we should be justified in drawing the same conclusions from our investigations and analyses of the marvellous natural products around us as those inhabitants did from observing and noting the marvellous constructional ingenuity of our rocket-torpedo. However wrong we may be, therefore, and whatever hideous travesty we may produce when we start modelling the Maker of those natural products after our own selves and ideals, and in attributing to Him love, justice, goodness, righteousness, purity, and such other items of our prevalent ethical code, we are nevertheless on safe ground and as indubitably right as those inhabitants of the unknown planet would be in assigning an Invisible Cause to Nature and its products, and in attributing a master mind¹ to that Cause Invisible. Whether it is a 'Causeless Cause' or 'Original Cause,' we do not know and can never know. All that we know definitely is that there is a Cause and that it is Invisible. Furthermore, we have a knowledge of the Existence of Something we cannot penetrate, of an Intelligence of unimaginable sublimity and the most radiant beauty locked up somewhere in the bosom of Nature, which unhasting, unresting liberates Itself and finds expression in things of Nature.

¹ 'We discover that the universe shows evidence of a Designing and Controlling Mind that has something in common with our own individual minds—not, so far as we have discovered, emotion, morality, or aesthetic appreciation, but the tendency to think and design in the way which, for want of a better word, we describe as mathematical.'—James Jeans's *Mysterious Universe*, ch. v.

It is this knowledge and this emotion that constitute the truly religious attitude. Einstein puts the whole matter in a nutshell when he says: 'The religious feeling of the scientist takes the form of a rapturous amazement at the harmony of natural law, which reveals an Intelligence of such superiority that, compared with it, all the systematic thinking and acting of human beings from the beginning of creation is only an utterly insignificant reflection.'

By whatever name we may know that Great Intelligence and Invisible Cause—call it, if we may, Eternal Energy or Primeval Force, Great Designer or Supreme Artificer, Élan-Vital or Over-Soul, Mazda or Jehovah, Ishvara or Allah, Amitabha or Adi-Buddha, or as the Mahayana School names it, *Bhutatahata*—and however unwisely some among us may personify this Eternal Essence of all things that be, and cravenly fall on our knees before this deistic personification of our minds and imagination, of the Existence of the Invisible Cause itself, and of its possessing a Master Mind, we are left in no reasonable doubt. I say 'reasonable doubt' again with purpose. For no world-problem, worthy of the name, is ever capable of complete or perfect solution, but only of a relative and practical solution. Hence, the problem of the Existence of God or of a Creative Power in Nature, as we said before, is capable of practical solution: that is, it is capable of such an elucidation as would lay open a part of the mystery in which it

is shrouded, reasonably satisfy human curiosity and lead us, by way of inferential deduction, to form a definite opinion amounting almost to a conviction about the Existence of Mind behind Nature; in other words, about the Existence of God.



THE UNREALITY OF SELF

‘It was his refusal to allow any place for the universal belief in a semi-material Soul in his own System that is the most striking and perhaps the most original feature of Gautama’s teaching.’

Rhys Davids.

CHAPTER VIII

THE UNREALITY OF SELF

As the greater includes the less, so the great problem of the Deity, the Universal Soul, involves the lesser problem of the Ego, the Individual Soul. Here again every other great religion of the world takes for granted the Existence of the Soul and then inquires into its nature and attributes. Here again Buddhism is the sole exception, for Buddha maintained once more his noble silence, when the wandering monk, Vacchagotta, questioned him on the subject. Asked Vacchagotta:

How does the matter stand, Venerable Gautama, does the Ego exist?

When he said this the Exalted One was silent.

How then, Venerable Gautama, does the Ego not exist?

And still the Exalted One maintained silence. Then the wandering monk Vacchagotta rose from his seat and walked away.

The awakening to the mystery of life is a revolutionary event in a man's life. We then become mysterious strangers to our own selves and inquisitively ask ourselves: who are *We*? Are we really the form we see in the mirror? If not, who then is it that feels and thinks within us; that wills and struggles, plans and dreams; that

can control the needs and suppress the desires of this physical structure of bone and tissues which we once thought to be *self*? It is then, and only then, that we awake to the *Consciousness* that we have never really known ourselves. We have used the word 'Consciousness' above. But what is Consciousness? It is important to know that the whole problem of the human Ego is intimately connected with the larger problem of Human Consciousness. Do we know anything about it? Very little indeed, if anything at all; for the great Realm of Consciousness is practically *terra incognita* to us. We know that it is immeasurably vast, its vastness soaring beyond human conception and imagination, but we know next to nothing of its subtler working. What is it that happens when we feel and think, when moral struggle takes place in us, when we are inspired by and respond to beauty, or gladly sacrifice our all for a cause which we have made our own? It is as if we were prisoners in a vast palace, living confined to a small and bare room, beyond which stretch lordly apartments to which we have no access, but out of which come strange whisperings and mysterious visitors in the form of feelings, thoughts, hopes and fears, desires and passions, and pass through our chamber of confinement, without our knowing whence they come or whither they go. All that we are made conscious of is the results. We notice only that which rises to the surface and becomes perceptible. But what about that which lies *above* the surface, and

that which lies *under* it? Of supra- and sub-consciousness we know next to nothing, except that we now begin to realize that we have come into contact with a vast and unexplored world of mystery which, strange to say, is the world of our own inner life. In a word, we are discovering the Wonder of Life. Nothing now is common or familiar. Everything throbs with the pulse of a Mysterious Rhythm which is there for us to discover and experience.

It is in the most familiar things of life that the deepest mystery of existence lies hidden. If there is anything of which we feel absolutely certain, it is the world we see around us—a world so real to us that it would be madness to doubt its reality. We can see and hear, touch and taste that world and are so impressed by it that turn where we may, it becomes the fundamental fact of our experience—that there, opposite us, independent and apart from us, stands a physical world, utterly and entirely real, solid and tangible. Within ourselves we are aware of another world, equally real to us, equally accepted as a basic fact of our existence. It is the World of Consciousness of which we spoke before—the mysterious realm, out of which emerge thoughts and feelings, desires and impulses. But here we are faced with a strange contradiction—namely, that this world of our own consciousness is unfamiliar to us, even though it is our very self, whilst the world outside, which we know to be not-self, seems quite familiar and intimate to us.

Such then is the basic structure of our daily life—a solid, tangible, material world without and a mysterious realm of consciousness within, forming a fundamental duality which we take for granted without stopping to think about it. Let us consider these two elements of our universe and see how we come to know them. In ordinary consciousness all we know of ourselves is an unceasing, ever-flowing modification of our inner and outer life each second with the consequence that our awareness or state of consciousness is changing or becoming different every moment. All we really know are these *ever-changing states of consciousness or awareness*. No ideas or objects exist for us unless they come into contact with, and make a definite impression on, our consciousness. It is difficult to realize this simple fact because when we say we know a thing, all we really mean is that a state of awareness has been created in our consciousness corresponding in a superficial manner to the thing itself. This means that all knowledge, except that of our own consciousness, is *derived* knowledge. Yet, curiously enough, we feel perfectly confident of this derived knowledge and feel somewhat doubtful of what we apprehend directly through the world of consciousness within us: a stone lying at our feet is ever more real to us than our consciousness within, yet we can come to know that stone only *in* and *through* our consciousness.

The common way of explaining sense-perception is that through the senses a faithful image of the

world around us is reproduced in our consciousness in such a way that image and reality appear simultaneously and are exactly alike. In order to explain this process still further, we compare it to the action of a photographic camera, the lens of which presents on the focusing-screen an accurate and faithful image of a portion of surrounding reality. Satisfied with this crude explanation, we sink back into our habitual unquestioning attitude, content with the assumption that everything palpable to our senses is capable of such simple and acceptable explanation, never suspecting that we have not explained anything at all. For instance, it never occurs to us to ask ourselves: 'How does the image reach our consciousness?' The world is bright and luminous, but the sensory optic nerve as well as the cellular brain-pulp are embedded in absolute darkness. Again, is the image of the world which the senses produce in our consciousness a complete one? We know our senses are primarily selective besides being limited in number. Consequently, they can bring to our consciousness only the very few elements of nature to which they are sensitive and able to respond. Thus, in the case of sound and light, we need only look at a table of total vibrations in air and ether to realize how extremely small are the groups of vibrations to which our eyes and ears are sensitive and to which we react. To millions of other groups, which we know from scientific research to exist in the universe, we are

so completely insensitive that they might as well not exist as far as we, with our five senses, are concerned. Well might Professor Bose say: 'In reality we stand in the midst of a luminous ocean almost blind! The little that we can see is as nothing compared with the vastness of that which we cannot.' From the standpoint of reality, therefore, no human being has a right to call the world of his perceptions the world of fact; it is *his* world and nothing more—his selective interpretation of Reality as far as his five senses permit.

It is well to ponder for a while over this very simple fact of the selectivity of our senses and the problem that arises through that fact. Since the problem is the same for all our senses, we may take the eye, and the sense of vision connected with it, as representative of the principles of sense-perception in general. Let the object of our vision be an ordinary green tree. The light-vibrations which reach the eye from it are focused through the lens and act on the retina, causing certain cellular and chemical changes in it. If we 'tapped the wire' at this stage of the process, we should as yet find no trace of that which later will become our awareness of the green tree. It is of the utmost importance to realize that, up to this stage, the knowledge of the green tree is contained in these chemical and cellular changes and nothing more. These changes, in the next stage, will affect the optic nerve, along which a message is conveyed to that region in the brain

which corresponds to the sense of vision. Even at this stage there is no question of our becoming aware of the green tree. All that we should find in the brain, if we again 'tapped the wire,' would be a certain oscillatory change in the fluid contents of the brain-cells, brought about by the message conveyed along the optic nerve. It is at this stage that we 'see the green tree,' that is, our consciousness by that oscillation of the brain-cells is suddenly made aware of the existence of the tree. How this happens is still one of the unsolved mysteries of sense-perception, which neither physiology nor psychology has yet succeeded in solving. The gap between the last perceptible change in the brain-cells and our awareness of the object, with its colours and form, is still left unbridged. There is, no doubt, some *unknown reality* which strides across the gap, reacts on our senses, and somehow produces in our consciousness the awareness of the green tree. But in the absence of all knowledge, *the unbridged gap between the brain and consciousness* still remains the mystery of mysteries in the matter of sense-perception. We have an inside feeling that our body is apart from the world surrounding us. But this is a mistaken idea, for the body, with its eye, ear, and brain, is as much part of the outer world as the tree or the stone: and our perception of the body as a visible and tangible object takes place in identically the same detached way as our perception of the tree or of any other object in Nature.

There is never a truth but carries in it the possibility of misconception. The fact that 'the world we see around us' is an image arising in each individual consciousness and true only as far as we are individually concerned, should not make us come to the conclusion that therefore the world-image arising in our own individual consciousness is in some way our special creation and that we live in a world of our own making. This misconception, ordinarily known as *solipsism*, is of frequent occurrence in philosophic discussions. As we have seen, it is true that what I take to be an objective world is only the world-image produced in my own consciousness, but it is equally true that every phenomenon in my own purview of world-image is intimately and continually connected with an actual thing or a definite event in the world of Reality. The fact that at some moment I might cease to produce in my consciousness this purview of world-image does not in the least affect conditions in the world of Reality. Unreality comes when I assume the world-image produced in my own consciousness to be the thing in itself, exalting it to the height of an absolute and independent reality, whereas in truth it is only a relative and dependent reality, real for me, but *not* real in itself.

To sum up our explorations into the intractable Realm of Human Consciousness, we find that:

1. There is the solid, tangible world without, and the subtle, impalpable realm of consciousness within, ourselves.

2. There is nothing *unreal* about the solid, tangible world. It is entirely and everlastingly real.

3. What is unreal is our awareness of the solid, tangible world. The awareness is only relatively real, real for us, *not* real in itself.

4. Our physical body also forms part of the outer world, just as much as the stone and the tree.

5. They one and all belong to the outer world of *unknown reality*, which produces in our consciousness that image which we call the world, but which is only an *external image* of the world.

6. In taking this *external image* of the world as real and objective lies the great illusion of life.

7. Having thus objectified, externalized, and separated from our consciousness that which is indissolubly part of it, we find ourselves hedged in by such problems as: 'Self and Not-self,' 'Spirit and Matter,' 'mind and body.'

8. The remedy lies in getting back to the world of reality by casting aside, once and for ever the burden of long-cherished separative illusions of Individualized Consciousness and deliberately cultivating the unifying sense of Cosmic Consciousness, in which, according to the great Neo-Platonist, Plotinus, 'All things are located everywhere, in everything there is all, and all is in each thing.'

Let us now see how the conclusions to which we have come by our independent inquiry into the realm of Human Consciousness tally with Buddha's own teachings in the matter of *Anatta* or Non-Egoity. In the first place, the principle of *anātmata* lays down that nowhere in the universe, neither in the macrocosm nor in the microcosm, is there an unconditioned, absolute, transcendent entity or substratum. In simpler words, the principle disclaims and controverts the popular

belief in the intrinsic reality, complete detachment, and absolute permanency of the Individualized Ego or Human Soul. The Dhamma of the Enlightened One teaches that this animistic belief in a real, permanent, self-contained Soul is the most pernicious of beliefs, the most deceitful of illusions which the human mind could possess, a belief which must inevitably and irretrievably land mankind in the very depth of sorrow and suffering. As the *Bodhicharyatara* says: '*Atmanam aparityajya dukkham tyaktum na cakyate*'—that is, without renouncing the conception of *atmanam* or selfhood, we cannot overcome sorrow and suffering.

Again, all false doctrines of life invariably arise from this basic *atman* conception. Saith the Enlightened One to King Bimbisara at Rajagaha:

He who knows the nature of his Self and understands how his senses function and tend to deceive him, finds no room for the 'I' nor any ground even for its supposition. The world holds to the idea of 'I.' From this arises false apprehension and false doctrines. Some say the 'I' endures after death, others say it perishes. Both have fallen into grievous error.

Now attend and listen: the senses meet the object and from their contact sensation is born. Thence results recollection. Just as the sun's power through a burning-glass causes fire to appear, so does the knowledge born of sense and object, cause that Lord, whom you call 'Self,' to be born. The seedling springs from the seed, no doubt, yet the seedling is not the seed; both are not one and the same, yet are they not different! Such is the birth of the entire animated creation.

Ye that are slaves of the 'I,' that toil in the service of 'I' from morn to night, that live in constant fear of

birth, old age, sickness, and death, receive the good tidings that *your cruel Master—'I'—is a myth* and exists only in the world of fancy and fiction.

Self is an error, an illusion, a nightmare. Open your eyes and awake. See things as they really are and you will be comforted and attain Peace Everlasting.

He who is awake will no longer be afraid of nightmares. He who has found the serpent of his evil dreams to be, in reality, only a twisted rope will cease to tremble.

☐ He who has come to realize that there is no 'I' will renounce all the lusts and desires of egotism, and cultivate Good-Will without measure towards the whole world, above, below, and around, unstinted and unmixed with any feeling of making distinctions or of showing preferences, and will remain steadfast in this state of mind while he is awake, whether he is standing, walking, sitting, or lying down. ☐

From the above sermon of Buddha, we can justifiably conclude that he categorically rejected the reality of an immortal, transcendent Ego detached from Consciousness, but we should not be justified in inferring from it that he also denied the existence of a mere phenomenal personality—an empirical ego—an 'I' built up out of the elements of experience, and reacting on the elements themselves. Buddha no more denied this illusive, phenomenal ego—*Bhava*, than he did the phenomenal world—*Prapancha*. Saith the Enlightened One to one of the generals of Simha: 'The Tathagata teaches that there is no Self. On the other hand, the Tathagata teaches that there is mind. He who says that mind exists and understands, and that by mind what is called *bhava* is meant, speaks the truth.' Buddha,

consequently, does not deny man's soul composed of mind-matter; what he denies is the existence of 'Self' as it is commonly understood — the mysterious ego-entity in the sense of a kind of soul-monad which *all* other religions definitely maintain as residing behind or within man's corporal and psychical activity as a thing-in-itself (*chos en sou*). When questioned about human personality, the renowned Bhikshuni, Dhammadinna, replied: 'The Blessed One has said that human personality consists of the *Five Skandhas*.'

Let us inquire—What are the *Five Skandhas*?

The *Five Skandhas* are the five causally-conditioned elements of Life-Impulse. These are *Rupa*, *Vedana*, *Sanna*, *Sankhara*, and *Vinnana*. The first, *Rupa*, represents corporeality or the totality of sensations and ideas pertaining to one's body. The second, *Vedana*, deals with sensation or feeling or the momentary emotional state. The third, *Sanna*, concerns perception or ideation, as McGovern puts it. The fourth, *Sankhara*, has to do with differentiation, disposition, inclinations, and volitions—the congeries of mental faculties and propensities which together make up one's awareness. The last, *Vinnana*, has a wide significance and stands for all that we ordinarily mean by consciousness or cognition. Be it remembered that consciousness in Buddhism is not an eternal self-existing thing, but the temporary product of certain pre-existent material factors. The last four *skandhas* when combined are called *nama*, which when tacked on to the first, *rupa*, compose *rupanama*, which,

consequently, is the collective name for the Five *Skandhas* and also an alternative name for the phenomenal ego or *bhava* or *puḍgala*. Each of these Five *Skandhas* is changing and apt to be dissolved at any moment. If the component parts of a whole are ever-changing, illusive, and impermanent, it stands to reason, argued Buddha, that the whole, of which the above five *skandhas* are component parts, must likewise be changing, illusive and impermanent. Are we men, then, mere 'bundles of transitory states of Becoming'? So it seems, according to Buddha's conception of man. The Buddhistic Ego, consequently, is simply an organic aggregate of five *skandhas*—a mere animated complex of cognition: sensations, ideas, perceptions, emotions, and volitions. There is nothing resembling an eternal, immutable entity behind these. No doubt the 'I' apparently remains the same, but really its significance continually changes. Buddha himself explains this fact very ingeniously in *Kutadanta Sutra*, by saying that the apparent sameness of the ego is merely its continuity. Just as we speak of the identity of a river or a waterfall, though the water is continually changing, or of identity in the flame of a lamp at one moment or another, although the particles of the wick and oil being consumed are, at each succeeding moment, quite new and different. What characterizes the apparent sameness of the 'I' is the cohesion and co-ordination of a certain number of very frequently recurring sensations and ideas which, consequently,

come to be regarded as a permanent stock. This mere temporary cohesive unity of the ego is very graphically described by Buddhagosa in his *Yisuddhi Magga*:

Take the word—Chariot. It is but a mode of expression for axle, wheels, pole, and other constituent parts, placed in certain definite relation to each other. When, however, we come to examine the different parts, one by one, we discover in the absolute sense that there is *no* chariot. So likewise in exactly the same way the words 'living entity' and 'I' and 'ego' are but a mode of expression for the five attachment groups or *skandhas*, but when we come to examine the elements of being, one by one, we discover in the absolute sense that there is no living being there to form a basis for such figments, as 'I am' or 'I'; in other words, really and absolutely there is only name (*nama*) and form (*rupa*).

This famous Buddhistic comparison of the formation of human personality with the structure of a chariot—as also the two other equally famous comparisons of human personality with an ever-burning flame or fire or an ever-flowing river or waterfall—is certainly striking and illustrative, but is nevertheless inapt and misleading, since it is based really on a false analogy. Let us for a moment consider dispassionately and ask ourselves: 'Can a living, speaking, thinking, feeling, reasoning and organic creature like man be aptly and truly compared to a dead, dumb, mindless and inorganic structure like a chariot?' If we are honest about it, there can be but one answer, and that is an emphatic No. If, therefore, the comparison is inapt and false, any conclusion drawn

from such an inapt and false comparison must of itself be necessarily inapt and false. And so it is: for, to repeat once more, the component parts of the one merely combine to form an unfeeling, unthinking, inorganic unit called a chariot, while the component elements (*skandhas*) of the other vitally unite to form a feeling, thinking, reasoning, organic entity called a human being. An array of a thousand chariots, no matter how well disposed, is just an aggregation of a thousand chariots and nothing else. An array of a thousand well-disciplined human beings is *not* just an aggregation of a thousand men but an entirely new spiritual unit possessing, as all regiments do, a kind of group-soul, ordinarily known as *esprit-de-corps*, a collective sense of duty and honour, of loyalty and self-sacrifice and a developed capacity for combined action, feeling, and thinking. Likewise, when *rupa*, *vedana*, *sanna*, *sankhara* and *vinnana* co-ordinate and combine to form a human organism, they do not form just a *rupanama*, that is, the mere animated aggregate of the *Five Skandhas*, as the Buddhists choose to believe, but an entirely new organic unit or spiritual entity, ordinarily known as 'the ego.' When the *Skandhas* are thus organically united to form the ego, they originate among their perfectly unified skandhic selves a kind of *esprit-de-corps* or group-soul possessing a sense of honour, idealism, loyalty, morality, humanity, and a generally developed capacity for collective action leading to combined movement with one's fellow-men.

With the doubtful exception of the word 'Nature,' there is no other term in the vocabulary of men in which there are so many pitfalls, so many possibilities of misunderstanding as in the term 'the Ego' or 'Self.' Wisely, therefore, the Exalted One maintained his noble silence when the wandering monk, Vacchagotta, came and questioned him: 'How does the matter stand, Venerable Gautama: does the Ego exist or does it not exist?' Though the Exalted One refused to probe into the metaphysical problem of the existence of the Ego, yet he was a life-long opponent, a bitter and merciless enemy, of that which logically follows from a placid belief in the existence of the Ego—namely, Egoism.

What is Egoism?

Egoism is the most primary of human instincts which leads one to affirm the ordinary self, to minister to its wants unceasingly, to magnify its importance and rest wholly satisfied in it. Buddha saw in it the hidden root of every form of spiritual evil, and the first and last of moral defects. It was but natural, therefore, that Buddha should make its suppression the principal aim of his great Scheme of Life, and wage a life-long war against it, even when it disguised itself as a semi-philosophical theory. 'Set up a mental current of self-questioning,' the Master told his pupils, 'and attempt to ferret out what *you really are*, and trace the living being who thinks and feels within your body. Keep a watch on your thoughts, note how they arise and expand, and then en-

deavour to pin them down to the Stillness out of which they originally emerged. If you, my pupils, do this and do it persistently, and apply yourselves rightly and earnestly to frequent meditation on this great topic of fundamental importance to you and your fellow-men, you will ultimately track thought to its origin, Self to its secret lair, and Consciousness to its primal state. The personal sense of the Ego will collapse and vanish for all time, being replaced by the impersonal sense of that all-pervading Oneness of thought and consciousness which not only maintains the existence of your mind and body but also the minds and bodies of all creatures without exception.'

Leaving the more abstract aspects of the problem of Selfhood for the metaphysicians to wrangle over, the Enlightened One contented himself with combating, as above, the popular delusion about the individual ego being real, permanent, self-contained, and detached from the rest of its kind. It was against this last *separative* tendency of Egoism, known in doctrinal Buddhism as *Sakkayaditthi* or 'the Heresy of Separateness,' that his bitterest attack was levelled. Conversely, what Buddha most actively sought to do was to develop a consciousness among his disciples such as would not only lead them to overcome the besetting illusion of their separate individuality, but would at the same time make them realize that their separate individual life, apart from the collective life of their fellow-men,

had neither immediate meaning nor ultimate purpose. In other words, what Buddha taught was that each man carried within himself the line of his own horizon, mental and spiritual, which he could expand or contract at will. When the content of one's personality is sufficiently wide, it breaks through the shackles of individuality, engrafts itself in others and becomes cosmic-minded. Here at last we have come to the same conclusion as we did when we made an independent survey and explored for ourselves the mysterious Realm of Consciousness—namely, that the salvation of an individual, as of humanity, lies in 'casting aside, once and for ever, the burden of long-cherished separative illusion of individualized consciousness and deliberately cultivating the unifying sense of cosmic consciousness.' But, when by such cultivation one has touched the penultimate arc of one's world-embracing personality, and plumbed the abysmal depths of one's cosmic consciousness, the centre of the arc, as well as the starting-point of the plumb-line, remains still in one's self. It is, to be sure, the transcendent self or ego that one sees in cosmic consciousness; none the less it is one's self or the ego which is perceived in all one sees. The final limitation, like the final mystery, consequently, lies still, as ever, in one's self. To put it in the inimitable language of Oscar Wilde: 'When one has weighed the sun in the balance and measured the steps of the moon, and mapped out the seven heavens, star by star, there still

remains One's Self.' Consequently, in spite of Buddha's noble effort to free mankind, once and for ever, from the thralldom of Egoism, by splitting the Ego into its simple constituent elements of *skandhas* and melting away thereby its apparent unity and identity, the Problem of Human Personality still remains unsolved, and as mysterious and mystifying as ever.

THE PRINCIPLE OF BECOMING

'The most essential element of Buddhist doctrine, the full realization of which constitutes the enlightenment of a Buddha, is the clear enunciation of the Law of Universal Causation—the Principle of the Eternal Continuity of Becoming. This is the great contribution of the Buddha to Indian Thought.'

A. Coomaraswamy.

CHAPTER IX

THE PRINCIPLE OF BECOMING

THE religion of Buddha has been sometimes described as a religion of Actuality, as it is based on cold logic and hard facts of life in contrast to other religions, which are religions of Faith, as they are one and all based on creeds and beliefs which are the pure outcome of Revelations brought down on earth by special messengers from Heaven. Conceding that Buddhism is a religion of actuality, the question arises—What is Actuality? That is a pertinent question to ask any one who undertakes to expound the doctrine of Buddhism. It may be a pertinent question, but, alas, like so many others, it is a futile one. Let us, therefore, follow the excellent example of the Master and maintain *a noble silence* on it. We shall perhaps succeed better if we ask ourselves: 'What are the salient features of the phenomenon known as Actuality?' The three features are: Continuous Change, Unending Sequence, and Perpetual Movement. In other words, everything is impermanent, has a cause, and is in a state of ceaseless activity. These three features are vitally connected with each other and follow one another in sequence, as we shall see in this and the following two chapters.

We shall begin with the first, which is the fundamental premiss of Buddhism on which rest the logic and the entire Philosophy of Life which Buddha brought into the world. Take away the Principle of Becoming (*anicca*) and the massive structure of Buddhist thought crumples like a house of cards. The veriest tyro, who has given but a moment's thought to things around him, knows that there is nothing permanent or fixed on earth; but, on the contrary, everything without an exception is in a state of eternal flux, is a ceaseless succession of Becoming moments, that follow one another endlessly and countless, though imperceptible to our normal sense. As the burning light constitutes a body of flame, which apparently is constant, but in reality is never the same for two consecutive moments, so it is with all that has risen on earth. Whether the vibration-period of an atom in reality is as brief in duration as the flash of a thought in consciousness or extends over countless aeons, the awakened mind, through all the disguising wrappings of forms, perceives that all is comprehended in the vibration of Becoming. Even 'the everlasting hills' are not outside the Law of Mutability, since they are also slowly worn away by the invisible action of wind, frost, rain, and heat, and every single particle of the human body, we are told, is periodically replaced. The same applies to man-made things and institutions. From a delicately made china-bowl to a solidly built Gothic cathedral, from the most ancient

code of laws to a newly enacted statute, from the oldest of empires to a recently created kingdom, each and all, rise and reach their zenith and then as surely, however slowly, decline and die away. Every form that comes into being goes through each successive stage and then finally passes away. Hence the apparent solidity of the universe is destroyed by this knowledge and dissolved into a mere palpable, pulsating Arising and Declining of short or long duration. Rightly does Shelley say: 'Naught endures but Mutability,' for nothing escapes the Law of Mutability. As the inexorable Law of Mutability lies at the root and forms the basis of all earthly existence whatever, so does the pitiless Principle of Becoming lie at the core and form the basis of the entire Buddhistic System.



THE LAW OF CAUSATION

'In Buddhism, that most universal of natural laws,
the Law of Causation, is, as by the stroke of a magician's
wand, transformed into the Supreme Judge of the World.'

Paul Dahlke.

CHAPTER X

THE LAW OF CAUSATION

ANOTHER fundamental and inexorable law of nature, which follows inevitably from the Law of Mutability, is the Law of Causation. The former law embodies eternal flux and everlasting change and every single change is determined by a number of conditions. The most striking of these conditions is ordinarily called its Cause and the change itself is said to be the Effect of that Cause. Strictly speaking, the cause of any change is the totality of *all* the conditions that combine to bring about the occurrence. When a seed grows into a plant, the seed is, by itself, not the cause and the plant the effect, but the totality of conditions—that is, the seed together with the soil, water, air, light, and heat, as well as human thought and labour, in the case of cultivated plants, constitute the cause. No change occurs by itself. Every change stands in the relation of cause to some future change, and the effect in relation to a past change. All changes in the world depend more or less upon one another. This Causal Bond, which is found everywhere in experience, is called in the Dhamma by the technical name of *paticca samuppada* or dependent origination. A correct understanding of this

'dependent origination'—that is of the conditioned nature of all existence which has neither beginning nor end, is of the greatest importance in Buddhism, as we shall see when we come to speak of the *Nidanas* later on. It is said in one of the Buddhist scriptures, '*Pratitya samutpadam paṣyanti te dharmam paṣyanti ; yo dharmam paṣyati sa buddham paṣyati*': which means, he who has understood the principle of dependent origination or the eternal chain of causation has understood the inner meaning of the Dharma, and he that has grasped the Dharma has perceived the essence of Buddhahood.

Let us, in passing, consider exactly what we mean by *law*, when we speak for instance, of the Law of Causation. At the very outset, let us admit that, strictly speaking, it is incorrect to say that the change is due to the Law of Causation, for no natural law is the cause of the observed sequence in nature. Every natural law merely describes the conditions on which a particular change is dependent. A body falls to the ground not because of the law of gravitation, but the law of gravitation is the precise statement of what happens when the body is left unsupported. A law of nature does not command that something shall take place, but it merely states how something happens under certain defined conditions. While a civil law is a prescription involving a command and a duty, a natural law is simply a description, in which is formulated the repeated sequence of perceptions. As Professor Karl

Pearson tersely puts it, 'Law in the scientific sense is essentially a product of the human mind and has no meaning apart from human consciousness. There is more meaning in the statement that man gives laws to Nature than in the converse that Nature gives laws to man.' When a law is found to be true in all known cases, we naturally expect that it will apply in similar cases. The greater the number of cases in which a law has been known to hold good, the greater is the probability that it is universally true. If the sun has risen at a certain spot daily without fail for the last 5,000 years, that is, for 1,826,213 days, the odds in favour of it rising to-morrow are 1,826,214 to 1; and this amounts to saying that the rising of the sun at that spot to-morrow morning is practically certain, though not absolutely. From this it is evident that all we can say about the laws of nature is that they are *practically* universal, but not absolutely or *theoretically* so. This practical certainty is all that we mortals are capable of obtaining, for theoretical or absolute certainty would imply perfect and infinite knowledge, which is evidently beyond our capacity. Taking the Law of Causation, for instance, all that we can know positively about it is that in its causal nexus every link is so fashioned that, on the one hand, it is the cause with reference to an effect, and on the other hand, it is itself the effect with reference to a previous cause. A first link in the series which, as such, would be wholly cause, or a last link which, as

such, would be wholly effect, is humanly unthinkable. Every link is the unity of both, cause-effect; consequently, in the causal series are united infinitude of Time and Space.

It may be asked, why does Buddhism lay such emphasis on the Law of Causality? Because on it, or rather on its subsidiary law—the Law of Dependent Origination (*paticca samuppada*)—depends the great Series of the Twelve *Nidanas*, later called, the Wheel of Causation. They are the twelve *links* in the chain of Karmic Causation, by which a being comes into existence and which bind him to the Wheel of Life. The Twelve *Nidanas* are repeated in no less than ninety-six *Suttas* which, as every student of Buddhism knows, form that part of the Pali Canon which narrates the dialogues of Buddha. The importance of the Series arises from the fact that it furnishes an explanation of the general phenomena of creation at large and at the same time a clue to the special phenomenon of *Dukkha*, which is in a very real sense the key-stone of the whole arch of the Buddhistic Theory of Life.

As the Twelve *Nidanas* form a wheel, there is no actual starting-point. But as Ignorance, according to Buddhist teaching, is primarily the cause of human existence itself and subsequently of human suffering as such, it is usually placed first. Let us, therefore, commence with *avijja* in our enumeration of the Twelve *Nidanas*. In most Buddhist scriptures the Nidanic Chain of dependent origination is made to run thus:

On *Avijja*—Ignorance—depends *Sankhara*—mental predisposition.

On *Sankhara* depends *Vinnana*—individual consciousness.

On *Vinnana* depends *Nama-rupa*—mind and its expression in form.

On *Nama-rupa* depends *Salayatana*—the six sense organs and their functions.

On *Salayatana* depends *Phassa*—touch, the sense impression.

On *Phassa* depends *Vedana*—feeling, sensation.

On *Vedana* depends *Tanha*—thirst, craving for personal experience.

On *Tanha* depends *Upadana*—grasping, clinging to existence.

On *Upadana* depends *Bhava*—phenomenal-I.

On *Bhava* depends *Jati*—birth, the final outcome of *Kamma*.

On *Jati* depends *Jaramarana*.

Jaramarana results in old age, disease, and death—in a word, in *dukkha*.

It must be carefully noted that the Nidanic Chain being really a 'wheel,' its spokes are not to be considered only in the order given nor are they necessarily in time sequence. They are rather the interrelated factors in an endless whole. As Professor Anesaki says in his *Nichiren the Buddhist Prophet*, 'The Buddhist conception of causation, as applied to any relation of interaction, interdependence, correlation or co-ordination, is founded on an intrinsic necessity. . . . The Buddhist would not confine the causal relation within the idea of *time* relation.'

With the Buddhists, the Scientists have always

taken the Law of Causation as axiomatic, as fundamental and coextensive with the Universe in place, time, and subject. But, about ten years ago, a few of them gave up that hitherto impregnable citadel of Science and boldly asserted that the doctrine of the strict sequence of Cause and Effect in nature is no longer tenable. At present Scientists are about equally divided in opinion. They agree, however, on the phenomenon that brought about this revolutionary change in the scientific outlook on things: namely, the peculiar behaviour of a free electron in interaction with quanta. The electron appears to possess a kind of free-will or rather free-movement, which seems to give it a choice of behaviour and makes it apparently independent of any known law of nature. The most marvellous thing of all, however, is the action of the glands which, in taking up the material to be elaborated, display *a power of choice* that, so far as our ideas go, defies all laws. Not the least regard is here paid to chemical and physical laws as deduced by science from inorganic nature. Complete arbitrariness prevails. The epithelium of the stomach, for example, possesses the power of always despatching the hydric chloride, set free from sodium chloride, in one direction—namely, into the excretory ducts of the rennet glands, and of always sending the sodium carbonate formed in another direction—back into the lymph and blood circulation. The key-word to it all, as revealed to us by the latest researches in physiological

chemistry, is, therefore, *Arbitrariness*. Given time enough, of course, here as everywhere else, Science will make adjustments in thought and co-ordinate all such divergent facts into homogeneous laws. So at least scientists like Einstein believe, and they declare that even a temporarily discarded law, like that of Cause and Effect, is bound to be restored to its old supremacy by future scientific research; other scientists, like Eddington, are emphatic that the law of the strict continuity of Causation in the external world of nature has gone, and gone for good. The famous German scientist, Max Planck, however, does not think so. He maintains, on the contrary, that human beings are integral parts of a universe which is subject to rigid deterministic laws of nature: that is to say, there is a rigid sequence of cause and effect, every event being a link in the causal chain. The Law of Causation, however, says this great scientist, is of 'a transcendental character.' Being curious, we ask: 'What kind of character is transcendental?' In spite of all the wealth of explanation and scientific illustration which Planck gives in his epoch-making book, *Where is Science Going?* it is difficult to say exactly what he means by 'transcendental character.' Planck begins by reminding us of the deductive reasoning of Aristotle and other famous rationalistic philosophers and thinkers. Later on he takes his stand on the axiom—'Nothing comes out of nothing.' In other words, as no event in the world holds in itself an adequate

explanation of its own existence, there is a logical necessity for a supreme law of causation. Planck says: 'The first step which every specialized branch of Science takes consists of a leap into the region of metaphysics; and once the scientist has begun by taking his leap into the transcendental, he never discusses the leap itself nor worries about it. He tacitly accepts the transcendental law of causation which operates universally in the external Universe; otherwise, we would have the curious phenomenon of 'Nothing coming out of nothing.'

Science may, with Eddington and those of his school, permanently give up the age-long belief in the logical necessity and universal prevalence of the Law of Causation, or it may, with Einstein and others of his thought, one day revive belief in the Law and restore it to its former status of universal acceptance. Whatever the ultimate attitude of Science may be on this point, there is no gainsaying the fact that if eventually the iron Law of Cause and Effect goes, with it will go Buddha's entire Creed and Theory of Life.

THE CREED OF KAMMA

'The Kamma—all that total of a soul
Which is the things it did, the thoughts it had,
The "Self" it wove—with woof of viewless time,
Crossed on the warp invisible of acts—
The outcome of him on the Universe,
Grows pure and sinless; never more
Needing to find a body and a place—saved
From Whirling of the Wheel; aroused and sane
As is a man wakened from hateful dreams.'

Edwin Arnold.

CHAPTER XI

THE CREED OF KAMMA

As the fundamental Law of Mutability involves in itself and inevitably gives rise to the iron Law of Cause and Effect, so does the iron Law of Causation involve in itself and inevitably give rise to the eternal Law of Action and Reaction: in other words, to *Kamma* of the Buddhist Creed. What is *Kamma*? *Kamma* is derived from the Sanskrit word—*karma*, which means simply deed or action: its subsidiary meaning is 'action and the appropriate result of action.' Truly speaking, *Kamma* is a kind of force, a force in virtue of which every action is instantly and unfailingly followed by a reaction, just as every reaction is the necessary and inevitable result of a preceding action. This force which unites action and reaction is, on the one hand, wholly action and, on the other, wholly reaction, so also is the 'I,' on the one hand, wholly deed and, on the other, wholly the consequence of deed. In simpler terms, according to the Buddhist theory of life, [*Kamma* is the latent power which produces our present life as a mere reaction or a resultant effect of the sum total of the actions of past lives and assures us that our future life will in its turn be a mere reaction or resultant effect of

the sum total of actions of our present life.] In passing, be it noted that the law of cause and effect as soon as it is transferred to the moral sphere of beings, and thus endowed with self-consciousness, becomes *Kamma*, the supreme judge of the world. Indeed, in Buddhism *Kamma* takes the place filled by God in other religions. The only difference is that while God, except in Judaism, is represented as invariably Merciful by nature and partial by means of his 'free, unmerited Grace,' *Kamma* is primarily ruthless by nature, being inexorably just, impartial, and no respecter of persons in its cold, logical working. As a well-polished mirror gives back in its smallest detail and with flawless exactitude any picture we may bring opposite its surface, so does *Kamma* with equal flawless exactitude throw back the consequence of each and every deed upon the doer. Not a quiver of an eyelash nor a movement of a finger but is instantaneously reflected and invisibly recorded in the eternal mirror of Nature: not a thought nor a sigh can be 'lost in time or space.' Well is it said in the great Buddhist scripture, *Dhammaspada*:

Neither in the kingdom of air, nor in the depths of the sea, nor even if thou buriest thyself in the fastnesses of the mountains, shalt thou find anywhere on earth a state where thou mayest escape the fruit of thy actions.

[Superficially viewed, we are the creatures of this pitiless force, *Kamma*, and lie under its dreaded power, but in ultimate analysis *Kamma*,

which mercilessly drives us from birth to birth, is nothing but a web of our own weaving, a bed of our own making, a product of our own will and desire. The Buddhist Universe is a complicated piece of machinery, a kind of giant ready-reckoner, which in its cold calculations knows no such thing as pity, mercy, free grace, or forgiveness of sins. In it, consequently, the whole process of the committing and cancelling of sin has about it something of the cold accuracy of a banking corporation's book-keeping. Every deed is duly entered in the eternal ledger, either on the credit or the debit side. So many pounds, shillings, and pence of deeds to the good and so many to the bad which must be balanced up and settled periodically at each birth. There is no escape for the defaulter.

An ideally perfect equity, in the form of *Kamma*, rules the Buddhist world. No outside force can mould my destiny. I alone can do that. I myself forge the fetters of my own fate; and I myself can, if I so wish, file them through. No God or man, no prophet or apostle can render me direct help here. It has been rightly claimed by the Buddhists that 'in no other religion does humanity stand in a position of such sublime unhampered greatness as in the system of the Buddha.' Everything in it depends on oneself. Says the great *Dhammaspada*: 'By oneself the evil is done; by oneself one suffers. By oneself evil is left undone; by oneself one is purified or liberated.' If one is intelligent and circumspect, to oneself alone is the

credit due: if one becomes thoughtless and indifferent, the blame is entirely one's own, for

['Ye suffer from yourselves. None else compels
None other holds you that ye live and die,
And Whirl upon the Wheel, and hug and kiss
Its Spokes of Agony.']

As each heart-beat is the final product of a countless number of past heart-beats, and the transmitter, the producing medium for the endless series of heart-beats that are yet to follow, and as the Now is the product, the final result of the beginningless Past and the producer, the bearer, the begetter of the endless Future; so exactly is Kamma the product, the outcome, the consequence of all past deeds and the bearer, the begetter, and a kind of mother's womb of all future deeds. In a word, it is all a self-generating process wherein action and reaction carry on their eternal game of squaring up old accounts with logical sequence and mathematical exactitude, irrespective of the working of time and space.

'The fixed Arithmetic of the Universe,
Which meeteth good for good, ill for ill,
Measure for measure, unto deeds, words, thoughts,
Watchful, aware, implacable, unmoved;
Making all future fruits of all the pasts.'

It must, however, be carefully noted that it is not *any* deed and *every* action that go to form or build up one's individual *Kamma*, but only those deeds and those actions that spring from one's individual will, set desires, and deliberate intentions. Will, desire, and intention are, therefore,

all in all in the formation of one's *Kamma*. For instance, if a man were hypnotized and temporarily deprived of his power to will and then compelled to stab or shoot another man, that particular act of homicidal frenzy would not go to form his *Kamma*. Though the doer in such a case is not, according to the strict theory of Buddhism, held responsible for a deed he has not willed and was powerless to resist, yet the deed in itself is never lost or cancelled, but goes to form the *Kamma* of the man who hypnotized and temporarily took possession of the will-power of the apparent doer of the deed. [Will, desire, and intention are, therefore, the prime factors in the formation of one's individual *Kamma*. This fact must be carefully borne in mind, for here is the special and distinguishing teaching of Buddha, which is in a sense the crux of Buddhism. If only willed deeds and intended actions go to build up one's *Kamma*, it logically follows that if no deed whatever is willed or any action intentionally taken, then no *Kamma* whatever can possibly be formed. Herein lies the use of the twelve *Nidanas*, or rather one of them, namely *tanha*, or craving for life and personal experience. If one wishes to be free once and for ever from 'the Wheel of Births,' one has to break the Chain of Kammic Causation by snapping it at the eighth *nidanic* link of *tanha*. Simply put, if one ceases to will a deed and gives up *tanha*, one automatically ceases to form one's individual *Kamma*; for, as we saw in a former chapter, on *tanha* depends *upadana*

or grasping; and on *upadana* depends *bhava* or the illusive-I; and on *bhava* depends *jati* or birth, the final outcome of *Kamma*; and with *jati* commences *soka - parideva - dukkha - domanass' upayâsâ*, in a word, *jarâmarana*—that is, death, disease, and decay, the trials and tribulations of life, the stress and strain of existence.

THE DOCTRINE OF RE-BIRTH

'From body to body your spirit speeds on;
It seeks *a new form* when the old one has gone,
And the form that it finds is the fabric you wrought
On the loom of the mind with the fibre of thought.
As dew is drawn upwards, in rain to descend,
Your thoughts drift away and in destiny blend,
You cannot escape them, or petty or great,
Or evil or noble, they fashion your fate.'

E. W. Wilcox.

CHAPTER XII

THE DOCTRINE OF RE-BIRTH

To the Creed of *Kamma* the Doctrine of Re-Birth is a necessary and logical corollary. There would indeed be no sense in *Kamma's* book-keeping of the good and evil deeds of a man, if no opportunity were to be given to him after death to square up his old account. And there is no better means of settling this *Kamma's* Accountancy than by Re-Birth.

The problem of Re-Birth is necessarily involved in the greater problem of Life. What is Life composed of? Whence does it arise? According to the teaching of all the revealed religions of the world, man's Life is composed of body and soul: the soul is the handiwork of God, and the body of one's parents. [According to science, a man is a complex product of the combined influence of heredity and environment. According to the Buddhist doctrine, a man owes his life neither to God, nor to nature, nor even to his parents, but to his own past actions. All beings are, therefore, purely and simply products of their past actions or *kamma* (*Kamma-yoni*). Therefore it is said: 'Heirs of Action (*Kammadāyada*) are living beings.' A man is not judged by God, nor by his fellow-men; but he is judged by his own actions,

he being the heir of Action (*Kammadayada*). According to Buddhistic teaching, nothing matters except Action—Life itself being a single unbroken process of Action, of which death and birth are mere passing, ever-recurring phases. Where there is an unbroken process of Action, there is also an unbroken process of Grasping. That is to say, all action (*Kamma*) may be translated into grasping or craving (*tanha*). And it is the craving that produces men: *tanha janeti purisam*. Conceded that the cause of human origin is *kamma-tanha*, the question arises: Is the human being reborn through his *kamma-tanha* the same as the old being, or something different from it? For the answer let us go to Buddha himself. Once a Brahmin asked Gautama:

How does the case stand, O Gautama? Does the Self that now lives experience the results of his deeds in Re-Birth?

The Self that now lives, that Self experiences the results of his deeds—this, Brahmin, is one extreme.

Does the case stand thus then, O Gautama? Another than the now living person experiences the results of his deeds?

Another than the now living person experiences the results of his deeds: this, Brahmin, is the other extreme.

Avoiding both these extremes, the Perfect One points out the truth that lies between these two; and then follows the series of the Twelve *Nidanas*, from *avijja* to *jaramarana*. What Gautama means is that when a person is reborn, he is neither the same Self nor yet another: in somewhat the same fashion that the 'I' as deed or

action, is different from the 'I' as the consequence of that deed, as reaction, and yet the two I's are basically the same. That is to say: there is absolutely no 'I' present but only a process—the endless self-generating play of action and reaction. The whole course of Buddha's thought, as we saw in a previous chapter, lies along the fundamental belief that there is absolutely no 'I' present, that a Soul, a true 'I' or Ego, does *not* exist. One thing he teaches consistently and persistently, is that what we have hitherto regarded as 'I,' as a separate Self, is in truth an illusion. But every *illusion* must have something *real* as its basis, just as every illusive reflection in a lake or a mirror must have something real to correspond to that reflection. If this analogy holds good in the case of the Buddhist theory of *anatam*, then it follows that as the basis of the illusive-I, *bhava*, there must necessarily be some kind of real-I, *atma*. Consequently, at the dissolution of the form, this real-I or *atma*, in one way or another, must survive bodily death and become manifest. But, how is this possible when there is no 'I' present? If there is no 'I' present, there is also no doer present. If there is no doer present, how can there be any consequence of deed, any punishment, any reward? Buddhism, to be sure, denies the real I-doer, but there is nevertheless, the deed. We cannot get away from the deed. As the body casts a shadow, as the stone thrown into the water gives rise to ripples, so every deed inevitably brings its consequences along with it.]

As every reaction is conditioned by the specific nature of the action, so the mode and manner in which the consequences of a deed find expression are determined by the deed itself. In simpler words, reward and punishment are involved in good and evil deeds and automatically follow them in the next existence. As the Blessed One said to Kutadanta, the head of the Brahmins:

There is no transmission of thy Self or individualized personality, but there is for certain re-birth of thy mind and character. Thy thought-forms and deed-consequences reappear, just as the stanza uttered by a teacher is reborn in the disciple who repeats it. . . . Only through ignorance and delusion do men indulge in the dream that their souls or individualized personalities are separate and self-existent entities.

This is the Buddhistic doctrine of Re-Birth. One's next life, consequently, will correspond in its make-up to one's *Kamma* or one's deeds of this life. Even if there is no 'I' present, yet the tiniest particle of its action is a deed and can never be lost. 'The peculiarity of Buddhism,' says Dr. Rhys Davids, 'lies in this, that the result of what a man is or does is held *not* to be dissipated, as it were, into many streams, but concentrated together in the formation of *one new sentient being*.'

'Well and good!' says the reader. 'But what do all my evil deeds matter to me, if my I-consciousness and my own identity do not pass over with me? I know nothing at all of the pain which, owing to my misdeeds, concentrates itself in the formation of "one new sentient being." It

stands immeasurably farther off from me than, for example, the suffering of my neighbour, with whose pain, moreover, I stand in some sort of imaginative contact through the medium of my senses. What I want to know is: Is the inheritor of my *kamma* identical with me, or again am I identical with the man whose *kamma* I inherit as really and unmistakably as the identity between myself of to-day and myself of a year or ten years ago? If it is not as real and unmistakable, then the doctrine of Re-Birth, as interpreted by the Buddhists, seems to me radically opposed to common sense and natural justice. To tell me to give up all the desires of my life in order that somewhere in the remote future, one Smith may be supremely happy for a few decades and one Brown may find final deliverance from taking birth in this vale of tears and sorrow, is to set me a meaningless and ridiculous task. Then, again, has not the Master spoken of the faculty of remembering one's previous births (*pubbenivassati*) and referred again and again to his ninety-one *Kappas*? If one is to believe in this Buddhist doctrine of *Kappa* and *pubbenivassati*, one must perforce believe in some kind of evolving identity in the individualized personality of previous birth and that of present birth. Not to believe in any such continuous evolving identity is to give the direct lie to the doctrine itself.'

I have allowed the reader to question me at this length, for I not only sympathize with his difficulties but his difficulties are exactly my own.

Rightly did Mr. Edmund Holmes say that, if denial of the Ego is real, if the meaning and logical sequence of such a denial is fully pressed home, the Doctrine of Re-Birth, as expounded by most Buddhist scholars and recognized authorities 'becomes pure nonsense.' Hence it is that the doctrine of Re-incarnation, when divorced from the doctrine of a re-incarnating individualized Soul or Ego, loses its meaning and its value and becomes wildly fantastic—as Western thought has long assumed it to be. On the other hand, it is reasonable to suppose that, if there is no Ego, the inward consequences of a man's conduct must end abruptly at his death. Again, to say that conduct always reacts upon character, and that the departing soul will, therefore, take away with it from earth the inward consequences of its action and bring these back to earth with all their possible ulterior consequences at its next birth, is to say something that is eminently reasonable, however, one may have one's doubt about its probability or even its bare possibility. But to suppose that the natural consequences of my past unredeemed actions, which have diffused themselves far and wide during my lifetime, will after my death—perhaps long after my death—be gathered together by some magical process and reunited in 'one new sentient being' having no identity with me, as Dr. Rhys Davids puts it, is to suppose something that is obviously unreasonable. Likewise the alternative supposition that Brown, the inheritor of my *kamma*, will be rewarded or

punished for my past unredeemed actions while he is on earth is not only obviously unreasonable but does positive violence to our sense of justice and fair play. The attempts which Dr. Rhys Davids, Dr. Paul Carus, and other Western interpreters of Buddhism have made to bring the Buddhist doctrine of *Kamma* into line with the scientific doctrine of heredity or physical causation and the like are both futile and inconclusive. Consequently, if we are to see any meaning in Buddha's constant appeal to his followers for righteousness and good conduct, we must cast aside for the nonce Dr. Rhys Davids's facile assertion that man as Buddha conceived of him 'is never the same for two consecutive minutes, and there is in him no abiding principle whatever,' and make a tentative assumption that my identity with the inheritor of my *Kamma* is, though evolving, as real and unmistakable as the identity of the me of to-day and the me of yesterday or of a year or ten years ago. Even those of the accredited exponents of Buddhism who have openly denied the Ego in theory, have tacitly taken for granted this assumption. For instance, that great exponent of Buddhism, Paul Dahlke, says: 'Buddhism does not deny the existence of an I-doer, but affirms a deed. For its effectuation no true "I" is necessary; it clings to the apparent-I, *bhava*, which ever and again rebuilds itself anew out of the will to live.' Besides, there is nothing to show that when Buddha expands and enforces his doctrine of natural retribution, he

has any doubt as to B, the newly reborn incarnated *bhava*, inheriting the inward consequences of the conduct of A, the original *bhava*. Do not the inward consequences of a man's conduct go to make up what we call his character? If so, then if A transmits his character to B, he literally transmits himself, that is, his real original self with all the inward consequences of his past mode of life and thought, of his beliefs, convictions, and ideals.

'No,' says the great Indian exponent of Buddhism, Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy. 'It is a man's character and not himself that goes on. Buddha nowhere teaches the transmigration of souls, but only the transmission of character, of personality without a person.'¹ Dahlke likewise says:

It is no persisting something in itself that passes over; it is the individual tendency, the predispositions, the character, the consciousness, or whatever else one has a mind to call the value in potential energy represented by the I-process at its disintegration, that passes over, by immediately taking effect, striking in, imparting the new impulse to the material to which it is *uniquely attuned*—the material that appeals to it alone of all that is present, and to which it alone of all that is present answers.²

In short, Dahlke and Coomaraswamy wish to tell us that it is only a man's character that is transmitted, and it is transmitted in an impersonal, non-egoistic form, so that the entirely new per-

¹ *Buddha and the Gospel of Buddhism*, pp. 106, 107.

² *Buddhism and Science*, p. 69.

sonality that is born has someone else's transmitted character to which it was 'uniquely attuned.' When we put up a strong protest against the manifest injustice of such an arrangement and resentfully ask: 'Why should we innocent creatures willy-nilly be made to bear the consequences of actions of someone else's kammic past?' Dahlke has an answer ready: Because we happen to be composed of 'the material' to which the kammic past of that someone else was 'uniquely attuned.'

All this long and futile controversy between the various distinguished exponents of Buddhism, like Dahlke and Coomaraswamy and independent critics like Holmes and Radhakrishnan as regards the reality or non-reality of the Ego and its capacity to survive and retain or not retain its identity after bodily death, can finally be laid at rest by the citation of one well-authenticated, fully investigated case of the survival of human personality attested by a scientist of unimpeachable authority and world-wide reputation. Such a well-authenticated case happened more than sixty years ago, when the renowned scientist, Sir William Crookes, was specially commissioned by the Royal Society to make a complete scientific inquiry into the problem of 'Life After Death' and then write a full report of the results of his investigation for them. Sir William, though naturally possessed of scientific scepticism, yet kept his mind open and took up the inquiry in a truly scientific spirit, taking nothing for granted,

however unimpeachable the evidence, nor accepting a single alleged fact as proven unless it stood the rigid test of his own cold scientific method of investigation. The result of Sir William's two years' of inquiry was that a complete case was made out for the survival of human personality after its bodily death—so complete indeed in the case of Katie King, who had been Sir William's personal friend in life, that he had no manner of doubt left. And he reported accordingly to the Royal Society affirming the fact of the Ego or human soul and its survival and retention of its complete identity after death.¹ Add to the great scientist's irrefutable conclusions the weight of evidence of all the prophets that ever lived and the general belief of mankind at large in the Survival of Human Personality, and we have so strong and complete a case made out for the reality and integrity of the human Ego and its retention of its identity in full consciousness after death that, to a detached and disinterested investigator of Buddhistic thought and theory of life like myself, Buddha's own life-long cogitations on the subject and the conclusions he drew therefrom are purely and wholly of historical interest and value—and nothing more.

¹ cf. Sir W. Crookes's *Researches in Spiritualism*.

THE BURDEN OF DUKKHA

‘Nothing is needful to the Buddhist but sensitivity to,
and understanding of the *Burden of Dukkha*.’

Paul Dahlke.

CHAPTER XIII

THE BURDEN OF DUKKHA

EVERY great religion of the world has a key-note or rather a pivot-word on which rests its whole philosophy of life and round which gyrates its entire system of ethics. With Zoroastrianism it was—Purity: with Hinduism—Realization: with Judaism—Law: with Christianity—Charity: with Islam—Allah: and with Buddhism—*Dukkha*.

It is impossible for any one to have read Buddhist scriptures ever so negligently and not have noticed that *DUKKHA* forms really a large and very special element in the doctrine of Buddha. One would not be far from truth if one said—*Dukkha* forms the sole element of Buddhism. Upon no other point did Buddha lay such complete stress as upon this—that he came into the world solely and wholly that he might once and for ever relieve humanity of its Burden of *Dukkha*. ‘Just one thing only, monks, now as always declare I unto you—*dukkhassa ca nirodham*—of the Universal Prevalence of *Dukkha* and the Complete Uprooting thereof.’ In this world of illusion there is only one fact the Buddhist recognizes and that is the Burden of *Dukkha*. And there is only one objective that is constantly

before his mind's eye and that is, the removal of this Burden of *Dukkha*. *Dukkha*, therefore, is no mere appendage to Buddha's religion, no mere stray article of his creed, casually referred to and perfunctorily developed. On the contrary, it is the foundational belief and cardinal tenet of his entire system. It is, in fact, the *raison d'être* of Buddhism itself.

From the above it is evident that the entire creed of Buddha rests on but one word—*Dukkha*. On its reality and the valuation given to it, on its being what Buddha supposed it to be depends the truth or otherwise of his particular philosophy of life and of his entire system of ethics. If one can prove that Buddha's conception of *Dukkha* is partial and one-sided or the valuation he sets on it is over-weighted and so relatively false, then his entire teaching being based on such a relatively wrong conception and such a false valuation comes to naught. That such a danger hangs constantly over Buddha's creed of life is not only my own view of the matter but the matured judgment of one who was till his death perhaps the most brilliant propounder and propagandist of Buddhism in Europe—Paul Dahlke. Witness the following:

Just as for a man swimming in mid-ocean, naught but the ocean exists, so for the Buddhist, naught exists but *Dukkha*. Whatever does not issue forth from that seed-grain—'All Life is *Dukkha*'—does not belong to the genuine tree of Buddhist thought. Hence at the very outset it becomes abundantly clear that Buddhism is only adapted to such as find Life to be nothing else than

Dukkha in some form or other. Those only who make their plans of life on this basic hypothesis—all Life is *Dukkha*—can hope to attain the Buddhist goal of life. Nothing is to be gained by preaching Buddhism except where Life is felt and understood to be Pain and Suffering (*Dukkha*). Wherever this is *not* the case, the conclusions drawn by the Buddha will seem not only *absurd*, but even *frightful*.¹

Thus, the very *raison d'être* of Buddhism is the omnipresence and omnipotence of *Dukkha*.

What is this *Dukkha* of Buddha?

No word in the entire system of Buddhism is so difficult of elucidation or subject to more varied interpretations than this word—*Dukka*. The popular interpretation of Pain or Sorrow or suffering is not only a partial translation of the all-embracing Pali word, *Dukkha*, but even a wrong translation when it is made to mean the ordinary, commonplace pain of the world.² The Pali Dictionary rightly states: 'There is no word in English covering the same ground as *Dukkha* in Pali.' Ordinarily set in opposition to *Sukha* (ease and well-being), it implies a general sense of being not-at-ease or ill-at-ease. The Pali scriptures describing the characteristics and limitations of existence, include every kind of inconvenience and disharmony with one's immediate environment, whether it be due to pain or sorrow, disease or misfortune, irritation or friction, to passing ennui, to simple tiredness or

¹ *Buddhist Essays*, pp. 21 and 22.

² 'Above all, to represent Buddhism as the religion of the ordinary, commonplace pain of the world is the crowning height of misunderstanding.'—*Ibid.*, p. 64.

satiety or to nameless disquiet arising from pure *tedium vitae* or tension or the stress and strain of normal life, or to mere consciousness of the transitoriness, incompleteness and imperfection of life. Some of the exponents of Buddhism, like Dahlke, say that the bare realization of the fact of transiency is *Dukkha*. Some even go further and actually include in the vast category of *Dukkha*—joy and hilarity, fun and frivolity, as they lead—when the inevitable reaction sets in—to revulsion of feeling, to satiety and tiredness which is the one general underlying characteristic of *Dukkha* in every imaginable aspect of it.

The Universal Prevalence of *Dukkha* being thus the pivotal thought and its Complete Removal the basic doctrine of Gautama's philosophy of life, it was but natural that he should take the very first opportunity of expounding it to his disciples. And so he did. For, as we have narrated before, when after his Illumination he again met his former pupils, the Five Wanderers in the Deer Park at Isipatana at Benares, he preached to them his famous First Sermon wherein he in simple, unequivocal terms capitulated the Four Ariyan Truths or Axioms, *Chatvari Aryasatyani*, which, according to Dr. Coomaraswamy, comprise simply and briefly the whole *Dhamma* or Doctrine of Gautama.

The Four Ariyan Axioms are:

1. There is *Dukkha*.
2. There is *Samudata* or the Origin of *Dukkha*.
3. There is *Nirodha* or the Cessation of *Dukkha*.

4. There is *Maggam* or the Path of bringing about the Cessation of *Dukkha*.

The Perfect One expounding the Four Ariyan Axioms said:

This, O monks, is the Ariyan Truth of *Dukkha*: Birth is *Dukkha*; Old Age is *Dukkha*; Sickness is *Dukkha*; Death is *Dukkha*; to be united with the unloved one is *Dukkha*; to be separated from our loved ones is *Dukkha*; not to obtain what one desires is *Dukkha*; in short, the fivefold clinging to the earth is *Dukkha*.

This, O monks, is the Ariyan Truth about the Origin of *Dukkha*: It is the will to live (*tanha*) which leads from birth to birth, together with lust and desire, which finds gratification here and there; the thirst for pleasure, the thirst for being, the thirst for power.

This, O monks, is the Ariyan Truth about the Cessation of *Dukkha*: The extinction of this thirst by complete annihilation of craving (*tanha*) letting it go, expelling it, separating oneself from it, giving it no room.

This, O monks, is the Ariyan Truth about the Path which leads to the Cessation of *Dukkha*: It is the Holy Eightfold Path (*Madhyama pratipada*): to wit, Right Belief, Right Aspiration, Right Speech, Right Living, Right Effort, Right Recollectedness, Right Rapture.

In the course of his forty-five years of evangelical wandering Buddha is reported as having again and again laid down these four great truths of his discovery which he considered contained not only the essential philosophy of everyday life but the quintessence of his entire teaching. In fact, it was the epitome of his message to mankind. These four Ariyan truths, consequently, form what may be called the foundational doctrine of the Buddhist Creed. Though in one form or another he brought the Ariyan Quartet repeatedly

before his disciples, yet never on a single occasion did he say that they were to be looked upon as dogmas in which his pupils had to believe implicitly and unquestioningly without an *independent inquiry* of their own. Never at any time did he enjoin his disciples, as the great Christian exegetist, Cardinal Newman, once did: 'Avoid Inquiry, for it will lead you where there is no light, no peace, no hope; it will lead you into the deep pit, where the sun and moon and stars and beauteous heavens are not, but chilliness and barrenness and perpetual desolation.' On the contrary, the Master unequivocally laid down that nothing could be the teaching of the Buddha which is not consistent with Reason, or which could not be subjected to the dry light of critical investigation or could not stand the test of one's own independent inquiry. Buddha, in fact, was the first to profess and the first to propound the great doctrine which two thousand years after him Luther proclaimed at Wittenberg and started the Reformation—the doctrine of *the Right of Private Judgment*. The bare idea of any religious authority, no matter how high and unexceptionable, was repugnant to Buddha, for the *Dhamma* teaches that every man is the architect and moulder of his own destiny. The Creed of Buddha is, therefore, like the creed of genuine Science, a Register of Results—an outcome of human thought and labour, experience and experiment, and not a celestial set of commandments and dogmas to be enforced on mankind by any

Heaven-commissioned Authority. Let us, therefore, follow the first principle of Buddha himself and exercise our Right of Private Judgment by investigating for ourselves whether the interpretation put on the term *Dukkha* by Buddha is right, and, consequently, must be implicitly believed in, or is only partial and must, in consequence, be emended to conform to 'the register of results' of our own personal experience and independent inquiry.

No one can question the fact that *Dukkha* is in one form or another the common lot of all mankind. One might even go further and say that Suffering is the badge of humanity, nay, in a sense, of all sentient beings whatever. We live in a world which is full of sorrow and suffering, hatred, and ill-will. Hunger and passion are the two primary urges and unescapable companions of the great majority of human beings. When in a serious mood one betakes oneself to meditate on the destiny of Man and the purposes of Existence, one begins to wonder if Optimism is not the silliest nonsense that has ever been invented by man to console and bemuse his fellow-kind! Called into existence by instrumentalities over which he has no control, Man is involved in a lifelong struggle with forces, natural and supernatural, which work out their own inevitable issues utterly indifferent whether they help or hinder him. The wheels of the universe are deaf to the cry of human hearts. They grind on in their old heartless way regardless of our weal and woe. Deep down in the innermost

self of each one of us there is a certain vague feeling of helplessness and hopelessness in the unequal struggle of the petty self-centred will of man against the capricious and irresistible might of the world-will. One has only to glance through Winwood Reade to realize for himself that the Struggle of Humanity through the ages has only ended in the *Martyrdom of Man*. In fact, taken all in all, the tedium of life is so potent and persistent, its joys so few and fleeting, the path of glory and fame opens out to so limited a number and at such rare intervals—whilst of those regally-endowed Nietzschean men of highly vitalized nature there is such a dearth—that were the mass of men given choice at the time of their birth or were Death to appear suddenly before them and offer to renew their old lease of life, provided they consented to live over again the precise repetition of every incident and experience already undergone, those indeed would be brave who would accept the offer and step back into this sorry scheme of things, into this magic shadow-show:

Play'd in a Box whose candle is the Sun
Round which we Phantom Figures come and go.

It is when we calmly face this inevitable fact of all-pervading *Dukkha* that Buddha's philosophy of life sinks deep into our hearts and finds a responsive chord therein. Buddha was not the first—as assuredly he was not the last—to recognize courageously and proclaim unequivocally this

most unwelcome fact. Solomon of old once and for ever took up the wail of oppressed Humanity when he sighed: 'I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and, behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit': Plato argued that if Death were a dreamless sleep it would be indeed a wonderful gain. Job thought with Buddha that our days upon earth are a shadow, and so did the great bard of all time:

Life's but a walking shadow—a poor player,
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
And then is heard no more. It is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing.

Even to Kant—who in his pure transcendental idealism approaches the teaching of Buddha more than any other of the modern European philosophers—Life meant 'a perpetual contest with sheer hardships—a trial-time, wherein most succumb, and in which even the best does not rejoice in his life.' And it was Bacon who almost took the words out of Buddha's mouth when he said: 'Whilst with Sorrow here we live opprest, who then to frail mortality shall trust, but limns on water, or but writes in dust.' And Schopenhauer has vividly expounded the tragedy of existence in his immortal work.¹ Saith Schopenhauer:

Having awakened to earthly life from the night of unconsciousness the will finds itself as an individual in an infinite and endless world among innumerable

¹ *The World as Will and Idea*, vol. ii, ch. 46.

individuals all striving, suffering, erring; and as though passing through a frightful unpleasant dream, it hurries back to the old unconsciousness. Until then, however, its wishes are unlimited, its claims inexhaustible, and every satisfied desire begets a new one. No gratification whatever could allay its cravings [*tanha*] or put an end to its longings [*tanha*], and fill the bottomless abyss of its heart. Everything in life indicates that earthly happiness is a myth and only fit for children and lunatics to indulge in. The causes of this lie deep in the nature of things. . . . Life with its hourly, daily, weekly, and yearly misfortunes, big and small, with its frustrated hopes and recurring mishaps baffling all calculation, bears so plainly the impress of something we should become disgusted with, that it is difficult to understand how any one could have mistaken this and been convinced that earthly life was to be thankfully enjoyed and man destined to be happy. Age and death, to which every life necessarily hurries, are the sentence of condemnation upon *the will to live* [*tanha*], passed by nature herself, which declares that this will is a struggling that must defeat itself. 'What thou hast willed,' it says, 'ends thus; will something better.' Whatever may be said to the contrary, the happiest moment of the happiest mortal is still the moment he falls asleep, as the unhappiest the moment he awakens.

Indeed, so tired was Schopenhauer of the daily grind and so soaked was his mind in the Buddhistic ideas and ideals that he actually prayed for the Buddhist *summum bonum* of life when he sighed for that 'thrice-blessed day when, rising above the petty, meaningless routine of joys and toils of an earthly creature, he would be absorbed into the vast bosom of an ever-peaceful *Nirvana*.'

From the above it will be seen that we have fairly and squarely faced the unpleasant facts of

Existence and called as witnesses the great minds of old times and new in support of the fundamental hypothesis of Buddha's philosophy of life that all Existence is one endless *Dukkha*. Still our inner perceptions of things, in conjunction with the latest discoveries of science¹ and our own daily experiences of life, seem to tell us that the case made out by Buddha for the universal prevalence of *Dukkha* is in the nature of a special pleading. Our plain common sense and unbiased reason support this observation of ours by saying that there must be some flaw or omission, some kind of incompleteness in the argument that leads to the conclusion—that Existence by its very nature is and must necessarily be nothing but *Dukkha*. We have all—even the most unfortunate and down-trodden of us—experienced moments of pure joy and rare exaltation, nay hours, even days, of unbroken peace and unalloyed happiness. If this is a real, vital, recurrent experience of each one of us at certain definite periods of our existence, then it stands to reason that there must be some defect, some strange lapse somewhere in Buddha's way of reasoning or in the argument based on that way of reasoning. And what we are led to believe by our intuitive knowledge and daily experience of life was taught to mankind by a great thinker

¹ 'The new knowledge compels us to revise our hasty first impressions that we had stumbled into a Universe which either did not concern itself with Life or was actively hostile to Life.'—James Jeans's *Mysterious Universe*, ch. v.

and teacher of ancient times who lived and died centuries before Buddha did.

One day Zoroaster stood before the sacred fire, surrounded by a circle of his numerous followers, meditating on the great problems of Evil and of Human Suffering. Having contemplated the beams of the fire for a long time, he lifted his luminous countenance to the assembled disciples and said:

'I will now tell ye who are assembled here the wise sayings of *Mazda*, the praises of *Ahura*, and the hymns of the good spirit, the sublime truth which I see arising out of these sacred flames.

In the beginning there was *a pair of twins*, two spirits, each of a peculiar activity, these are the good and the base, in thought, word, and deed. Choose one of these two spirits! Be good, not base!¹

Zoroaster taught that there were Two Primeval Principles at the base of every conceivable object, both in the world of matter and of thought; and though they were apparently antagonistic, they were really complementary, being inseparably united from the beginning of Time and consequently called 'twins' (*yema*, Sanskrit *yaman*). An inevitable dualism based on these two Primeval Principles bisects nature, so that each thing is a half, and suggests another thing to make it a whole; as—spirit, matter; man, woman; odd, even; subjective, objective; in, out; upper, under; motion, rest; yea, nay. These pairs of twins solve the difficult problem of Evil and human Suffering better than any other philo-

¹ *Gatha Ahunaviati* (*Yas.*, xxx 1 & 2).

sophical system that the human mind has ever conceived. 'This, and this alone,' says Samuel Laing, 'seems to me to afford a working hypothesis which is based on fact, can be brought into harmony with the existing environment, and embraces in a wider synthesis, all that is good and indispensable in other philosophies and religions.' Even in our daily round of life we come across these twins in their manifold aspects of the rich and the poor; the strong and the weak; hope and fear; work and play; love and hatred; pleasure and pain; victory and defeat; labour and thought; and *Joy and Sorrow*. Both are indispensable, and we could not get rid of the one without at the same time getting rid of the other. Work to be efficient must be followed by recreative play, and play to be enjoyable must be intermixed with work. Thought can be made healthy only if accompanied by physical labour, and physical labour can be made happy only if accompanied by thought, and the two cannot be separated with impunity. Pleasure invariably ends in pain and the cessation of pain is in itself a source of pleasure. Health would be meaningless without the possibility of sickness and God's richest gift—love—can be fully appreciated only by those who have known what it is to be hated and despised. Hope itself springs out of undefined fear, and the term poor has meaning only by the tacit acceptance of its opposite. Nature, in fact, is like a mighty balance holding in its scales an absolutely equal quantity of the two

opposite states of things. If a quantity of evil is put into one of the scales, an equal quantity of good is put that instant automatically into the other. In fact, there is, as Emerson says, a Law of Compensation in nature. It works out with the mathematical exactitude of all laws of nature. For every sweet hath its bitter; every bitter its sweet. For every excess there is a proportionate defect, and for every defect there is a proportionate excess. A perfect equity seems to hold the evenly-balanced scales of nature. We in our ignorance vainly seek to act partially and disturb the Elemental Equipose of Nature. Down the long centuries man has ever been employed in the agreeable task of attaining the one dominating objective of his life—how to snatch some advantage out of one of the scales, without at the same time taking the corresponding disadvantage from the other. We are habituated to speak of right and wrong, virtue and vice, good and evil, as if they were something *absolute*, like gravity or chemical affinity. Herein lies the fundamental error of Buddha's way of reasoning. He takes *Dukkha* as if it were an *absolute* fact. Whereas, in fact, *Dukkha* is only a *relative* reality.

There is a sort of *relativity* in all our perception and knowledge. We neither know nor can perceive anything except in relation to or in contrast with something unlike it. We cannot, for example, know the right without knowing something of the wrong, or virtue without some perception of vice, or the good without some

knowledge of the evil—any more than we can know light without knowing darkness, sound apart from silence, or bitter never having tasted sweet.

This ancient philosophy of Zoroaster, of there being two Primeval Principles at the base of every conceivable object both in the world of thought and matter, finds strange confirmation in the very latest researches in scientific thought. Not ten years ago the world-famous Professor Niels Bohr of the University of Copenhagen, in collaboration with Einstein, advanced a new theory of knowledge based on the concepts of modern atomic physics. The new theory is called the *Theory of Complementarity*. The leading scientists of the world attach so great a value to Professor Bohr's discovery that they believe it will eventually rank with Einstein's own Theory of Relativity and Planck's of Quantum. Complementarity is really the outgrowth of Relativity and Quantum mechanics, and is in accordance with both Heisenberg's Principle of Indeterminacy or Uncertainty and Durac's Theory that there is no determinism in events in which atoms and electrons are involved singly, and that the apparent determinism in large-scale events is only of a statistical nature. In fact, Bohr's new theory only expands Heisenberg's Principle and Durac's Theory beyond the realm of atomic physics, where they have been primarily applicable, to include man's entire relation to the world around him and to all processes of knowing

and thinking without any exception whatever. To state the new theory briefly and in non-technical language we might say that Professor Bohr after a lifetime of research came to the conclusion that both in the ponderables of the physical and the imponderables of the mental world there is—an *inherent essential Duality*. Though essential it is not an *absolute* duality. That is, it is relative to the peculiar construction of Man's mind and to the fact of his possessing five senses of the type he does. If we had even one more sense, we should not only know more but should know things in radically different relations, so much so that in some cases things would present to our six senses an aspect directly opposite to what they do to our five senses. For instance, if we had the psychic sense we should see things in an entirely different perspective and our present Ideas of Right and Wrong would go by the board—at all events, would have to be changed, and changed radically. The intentions of the heart and the imaginings of the mind would then be the true standard of judgment, and not overt acts and deeds done in a moment of unguarded impulse or in a gust of passion. Again, the normal eye is only three-dimensional, if suddenly it was opened to a four-dimensional space we should form a very different concept of Time, and begin to understand what the Relativists mean when they say: 'The past and the future have no *absolute* existences but merely *relative* to a particular standpoint of observation

in Time,' from which it would follow that future Time and events in future Time already exist just as much as past Time and events in past Time still exist. As Hermann Weyl puts it: 'Events do not happen; we merely come across them,' or as Plato expressed it two thousand years ago in his *Timaeus*: 'The past and future are created species of Time which we unconsciously but wrongly transfer to the eternal essence. We say "was," "is," "will be," but the truth is that "is" can alone properly be used.' The world as we see and sense it has, therefore, no fixed or absolute existence, and is apt to assume certain definite and limited aspects in our three-dimensional sight and five-sensed mind which it never would, were our powers of perception not so confined and our senses so limited.

The Principle of Duality is, therefore, true, but true relatively to man only, and possesses a Jekyll-and-Hyde nature owing to which it has two apparently contradictory aspects: both aspects being true at different times, but *only one*, be it noted, at any one time. For instance, one could never come across Mr. Hyde and Dr. Jekyll at one and the same moment any more than one could be awake and asleep and experience silence and sound at any one identical moment of Time. In other words, the very process of knowing one half of the primeval duality makes it physically impossible for us to know the opposite half at the very same moment. There is, therefore, a definite discontinuity or rather Discontinuous

Duality in all things partaking of existence and of knowledge, so that when one thing is present and is perceived and is found to be true, this very truth perforce makes its opposite truth temporarily absent or non-existent as far as any possible active perception of it on our part is concerned. This discontinuous and apparently contradictory duality is inescapable because it is, for some reason unknown to us, an inherent part of the very mechanism of human thought and sense-perception. But for this strange arrangement of the Opposites, human faculties, constituted as they are, would be practically useless as they would be incapable of functioning; that is, incapable of perceiving or experiencing anything of the phenomenal or noumenal world.

If the ancient Zoroastrian *Principle of Duality* and the latest scientific *Theory of Complementarity* be right, then *Dukkha* in the nature of things cannot stand by itself, but must like everything else have a complementary opposite. And so it has: its opposite being *Sukkha*. Like any other pairs of opposites, light and darkness, sound and silence, bitter and sweet, *Dukkha* and *Sukkha* are for ever linked together, though owing to the peculiar construction of our faculties we are capable of experiencing and perceiving only one of the pair at any given moment of time. Unfortunately for the Buddhistic theory of *Dukkha*, in the eternal constitution of things both *dukkha* and *sukkha* are equally necessary, and neither can be dispensed with without at the same time

dispensing with or rather mortifying the very mechanism of human thought and knowledge and reducing men and women virtually to mere stocks and stones. For wherein lies the difference between men and women and stocks and stones? In the fact that one can feel and perceive and react to impacts and impingements of the outside world and respond to the stimuli of their senses, while the other have nothing resembling sense-stimuli and cannot but let the impacts and impingements of the outer world pass by unfelt and unresponded to. Should ever mankind attain the Buddhistic ideal and cease to be affected by the stimuli of *tanha* and by the impingements of *dukkha*, then human life would approach the life of stocks and stones, which is no life at all but rather death-in-life or, as it has been so aptly put in medical jurisprudence:

Painless Life is Death.

To transliterate this therapeutic theorem into Buddhistic phraseology:

Dukkhaless Life is Death.

Our own personal experience and independent inquiry, therefore, lead us to the general conclusion that Buddha's First Noble Truth—'There is *Dukkha*'—is not a whole truth, but only a half-truth, and exactly half a truth, because All Existence is not purely and wholly *dukkha*, any more than it is purely and wholly *sukkhā*, but a most complicated and inextricably involved process of evenly-balanced *dukkha-sukkhā*.



THE TUG OF TANHA

‘The Root of *Dukkha* is *the Tug of Tanha*.’

Dhammapada.

CHAPTER XIV

THE TUG OF TANHA

LET us turn next to the Second Noble Truth—
'There is the Origin of *Dukkha*.' What is the
Origin of *Dukkha*? Saith Buddha:

Now this, O monks, is the Noble Truth concerning
the Origin of *dukkha*. Verily it originates in that craving
thirst (*tanha*) which causes the renewal of becomings, is
accompanied by sensual delight, and seeks satisfaction
now here, now there, that is to say, the craving for the
gratification of the passions, or the craving for a future
life, or the craving for success in this present life [the lust
of the flesh, the lust of life, or the pride of life].

This is how the great English exponent of
Buddhism, Rhys Davids, translates the Second
Noble Truth and then commenting on it says:
'There is no doubt that we have here not only the
actual basis of the Buddha's teaching, but also
the very words in which he was pleased to state
it.' ¹

If these are the *ipsissima verba* of Buddha, then
we can safely maintain that the Enlightened One
definitely laid down that the basic cause of *dukkha*
was *tanha*.

What is *Tanha*?

Like *dukkha*, the Pali term *tanha* (Sanskrit

¹ *Buddhism*, p. 139.

trishna) is untranslatable by one word in English. Ordinarily the word 'desire' is chosen to signify *tanha*. But 'desire' is too weak a word to express the full import of *tanha* in Pali, the wide significance of which ranges from the fierce and ungovernable craving for power, wealth, and the pleasures of the senses to the pure and passionate yearning for selfless service and lifelong sacrifice in the cause of one's own people and of humanity at large. Witness the Buddhist *suttas*: 'Verily it is this thirst or craving, causing the renewal of existence, accompanied by sensual delight, seeking satisfaction now here, now there—the craving for the gratification of the passions, for continued existence in the worlds of sense.' In other words, *tanha* is more than mere desire: it is that craving thirst for the lower things of life and insatiable yearning for the higher which binds men on the Wheel of Re-Birth. Its nearest Western equivalent would be, what Schopenhauer would call, 'the Will to Live.' There are, therefore, different aspects of *tanha* and different names are used in the Buddhist Scriptures to express these varying aspects of *tanha*. For instance, it is called *upadana* when used in the above sense of desiring for and clinging to life. When employed to express its passional element it is given the name of *kama*. On the other hand, when employed to express the insatiable yearning for the realization of the higher and nobler phases of existence, it is known as *dhyama*.

Now let us inquire if *tanha* is the origin or the

basic cause of *dukkha*, as Buddha definitely lays down in his exposition of the Second Noble Truth. At the very commencement let us state that the problem of the Origin of *Dukkha* is contained in the larger problem of the Origin of Evil. Since the greater includes the less, the solution of the greater problem of the Origin of Evil will *ipso facto* lead to the solution of the lesser problem of the Origin of *Dukkha*.

From the remotest antiquity no problem of Existence has so occupied the mind and imagination of the wisest men of the world as the problem of the Origin of Evil. Of these wise men the most renowned of ancient times, Socrates, attempted to solve it and does indeed solve it for all time in one of his celebrated Dialogues.

'Then let us consider,' said Socrates to Cebes, 'the whole question, not in relation to man only, but in relation to animals generally, and to plants, and to everything of which there is generation, and the proof will be easier:

'Are not all things, which have opposites originated out of their opposites? I mean such things as good and evil, just and unjust—and there are innumerable other opposites which are generated out of opposites. And I want to show that in all opposites there is of necessity a similar alternation; I mean to say, for example, that anything which becomes greater must become greater after being less. Isn't that so?' 'Yes,' said Cebes. 'And that which becomes less must have been once greater and then have become less. Isn't that so?' 'That is so,' replied Cebes. 'And the weaker is generated from the stronger, and the swifter from the slower.' 'Very true.' 'And the worse is from the better, the more just is from the more unjust,' 'Of course,'

answered Cebes. 'And is this true of all opposites?' 'Yes.' 'And are you convinced that all of them are generated out of opposites? That is, all things such as good and evil, *joy and sorrow*, which have a contrary are produced or generated from nowhere else than their contrary?' 'Certainly, Socrates,' replied Cebes.¹

If Socrates were asked: What is the Origin of *Dukkha*? he would without hesitation answer, *Sukkha*. If the same question were put to Buddha, he would with equal assuredness answer, *Tanha*. Now let us investigate and see for ourselves by taking a concrete example, which of the two is right, Buddha or Socrates? We shall not go to Socrates, but to Buddha for providing us with a concrete example of *dukkha*. Of the seven instances of *dukkha* which the Enlightened One gives in his First Noble Truth, let us take the one about which no one can have any doubt that it is a real and genuine *dukkha* or suffering pure and simple, namely Ill-Health. Now according to Buddha the cause of the *dukkha* of ill-health in any of its multiple aspects is *tanha* or the craving thirst—to live and live for self-centred enjoyment which must eventually entangle men in pain and suffering. According to Socrates the real cause of ill-health lies in its opposite, namely, good health. How can good health be the cause of ill-health? On the face of it this sounds absurd. Obviously, therefore, Socrates is wrong. But *is* he wrong? Let us inquire

Of the varied kinds of ill-health let us, for

¹ Plato's *Phaedo*, ch. 15.

example, take the common ailment from which most of us have suffered at one time or other of our lives, namely, simple indigestion from surfeit. According to Buddha, the cause of this common human ailment is *tanha* or insatiable craving innate in human nature which in this instance appears in the aspect of inordinate appetite for food: according to Socrates the cause of such an indisposition is merely fine vigorous health demanding ample nourishment for the body through over-indulgence of which one is apt to suffer from a passing indigestion.

Which of the two is right?

Socrates with the gustatory demands of vigorous health as the cause of simple indigestion or Buddha with his baleful *tanha* of inordinate appetite? A little consideration will show that Socrates is right for the simple reason that Buddha's baleful *tanha* of inordinate appetite is itself the natural consequence of vigorous health. Were the health poor or below par all the *tanha* or appetite in the world would not bring about indigestion for the very obvious reason that there would be no *tanha* or appetite at all, for good appetite is an assured sign of good health. Arguing similarly we shall find that the origin or ultimate source of every kind of the *dukkha* of ill-health is the *sukkha* of good health.

Let us take another instance. We shall go again to Buddha's First Noble Truth and pick out another of the seven *dukkhas* mentioned therein—Death, for example. According to the

Enlightened One 'Death is *Dukkha*' and is due to *tanha* or will to live which all men possess. According to Socrates Death is not a *dukkha* at all but a natural and inevitable eventuation of all that is endowed with Life. Let us once again go to Socrates and see how he proves that Life is the basic cause of Death.

'And in this universal opposition of all things, are there not also two intermediate processes which are ever going on, from one to the other opposite, and back again; where there is a greater and a less there is also an intermediate process of increase and diminution, and that which grows is said to wax, and that which decays to wane?'

'Yes,' said Cebes.

'And there are many other processes, such as division and composition, cooling and heating, which equally involve a passage into and out of one another. And this necessarily holds of all opposites, even though not always expressed in words—they are really generated out of one another, and there is a passing or process from one to the other of them?'

'Very true,' replied Cebes.

'Well, and is there not an opposite of Life, as sleep is the opposite of waking?'

'True,' said Cebes.

'And what is that?'

'Death,' answered Cebes.

'And these, if they are opposites, are generated the one from the other, and have their two intermediate processes also?'

'Of course,' said Cebes.

'Now,' said Socrates, 'I will analyse one of the two pairs of opposites which I have mentioned to you, and also its intermediate processes, and you shall analyse the other to me. One of them I term sleep, the other waking. The state of sleep is opposed to the state of

waking, and out of sleeping waking is generated, and out of waking, sleeping; and the process of generation is in the one case falling asleep, and the other waking up. Do you agree?’

‘I entirely agree,’ said Cebes.

‘Then, suppose that you analyse Life and Death to me in the same manner. Is not Death opposed to Life?’

‘Yes,’ answered Cebes.

‘And they are generated one from the other.’

‘Yes,’ said Cebes.

‘And what is generated from the Living?’

‘The Dead,’ replied Cebes.¹

From the above very lucid and logical reasoning of Socrates it is evident that Death is due to its opposite, Life. Moreover, Death has nothing whatever to do with *tanha* nor is it in any real sense a *dukkha*. At all events, with all such men as are capable of thinking for themselves on the composite nature of all things that be, Death ought not to be looked upon as a *dukkha* in any sense of the term. Unbelievable as it may seem, it was Buddha himself who said so when his favourite disciple, Ananda, began to mope and weep when the Master was lying on his death-bed, calmly waiting for the Last Summons. Said the Master: ‘Enough, Ananda! Do not let yourself be troubled. Pray do not weep! Have I not on former occasions told you that it is in the very nature of all things that we must one day divide ourselves from those most near and dear unto us, leave them, sever ourselves from them. Anything whatever born, brought into being, and organized, contains within itself the inherent

¹ *Phædo*.

necessity of dissolution, how then, Ananda, can it be possible that such a being should not be dissolved?'

As we found, Buddha himself in his First Noble Truth unequivocally proclaims Death to be *dukkha*, and yet when one of his devoted pupils implicitly and unquestioningly accepts his teaching and considers Death actually as *dukkha* and like a normal human being gives expression to his feelings by weeping when his beloved teacher is on his death-bed, the teacher rebukes his pupil for acting up to his own teaching. Such, alas! is the inherent and ineradicable contradictoriness of Human Nature even in the most exceptional and exalted instance of its manifestation!

All the trouble of Buddha's reasoning about *dukkha* arises from his wrong conception of its true nature. He always argues about *dukkha* as if *dukkha* were a thing absolute in itself. Whereas, in reality, *dukkha* and *sukkha*, like sound and silence, light and darkness, sleeping and awaking are merely co-relative terms giving expression to ever-shifting states of reactions of earthly existence. Consequently, the degrees of *dukkha* are merely the negative aspects of the degrees of *sukkha*, just as the degrees of *sukkha* are the negative aspects of the degrees of *dukkha*. Of the absolute *dukkha*, any more than of the absolute *sukkha*, of any finite being we can form no conception whatever. As the Master himself teaches, we are all of us in every minute of our existence in a state of transition. In other words, we tilt

every moment of our lives up and down an invisible see-saw of *Sukkhā-Dukkha* whereon with the slightest rise of the arm of *Sukkhā*, the arm of *dukkha* is instantly and correspondingly depressed, so that if we could construct a self-registering seismograph to oscillate in conjunction with our see-saw its graph would show a running line continuously oscillating from one degree of *sukkhā* or *dukkha* to another degree of *sukkhā* or *dukkha*. So here again we come to the conclusion that the Second Noble Truth of Buddha—'*Tanha* is the origin of *Dukkha*'—is not a truth at all, not even half a truth as we found the First Noble Truth to be, but only an unprovable generalization based on debatable assumptions.

THE CESSATION OF DUKKHA

'Upon no point did the Buddha lay such complete stress as upon this—that he only came into the world that he might bring about the *Cessation of Dukkha*.'

Paul Dahlke.

CHAPTER XV

THE CESSATION OF DUKKHA

SAITH the Master: 'Now this, O monks, is the Noble Truth concerning the *Nirodha* of *Dukkha*. Verily, it is the Cessation, in which naught remains of this craving thirst (*tanha*): the laying aside, the getting rid of, the being free from, the harbouring no longer of, this craving thirst (*tanha*).'

Now let us investigate and see if this Third Noble Truth has the same defects as the two others we discussed in the two previous chapters. In the first place, let us be careful how we translate the Pali word—*nirodha*. Strangely enough, the greatest wrong is often done to Buddha not by his detractors and antagonists but by his staunch protagonists and devout propagandists. Witness Rhys Davids, who translates *nirodha* as destruction.¹ Now the Master never said anywhere and certainly could never have meant at any time that *dukkha* could be *destroyed* or become extinct in the world at large. What he said was that *dukkha* could be made to cease—that is, be rendered so inoperative as almost to become non-existent in the case of particular individuals,

¹ *Buddhism*, p. 137.

though it might and certainly would prevail in the rest of the world. And even in the case of particular individuals it would cease or remain inoperative only so long as they followed the Master's teaching in its entirety by 'the laying aside of, the getting rid of, the being free from, the harbouring no longer of this craving thirst, *tanha*.' What, therefore, Buddha desired of his followers was that they should completely lay aside and entirely get rid of *tanha*. In other words, Buddha does not wish for the destruction of *tanha* from the world at large but only its complete abrogation from the life and worldly pursuits of his faithful followers. The next thing we have to inquire is, constituted as the human being is: Could *tanha* be really extracted out of his life and consciousness, root and branch, or only superficially eliminated, leaving the roots intact and alive in the sub-soil of the conscious—that is, in the region of the sub-conscious?

To answer this question at all satisfactorily we shall have to delve a little into the philosophy of the Unconscious. We are all aware of the startling new psychology dealing with the Unconscious which is undermining all our old faiths about education, art, moral responsibility, and free will. Only a few years ago the Unconscious was a mere negation, a hiatus in life, quite negligible in the sum. To-day we find that *the Unconscious is Everything*. It is nearly the whole of us, both as groups and as individuals. It is dynamic, not static; while the conscious, which we

used to consider as practically the whole life, is now looked upon as merely a particular manifestation, and not a very important manifestation at that, of our complex mental apparatus, commonly known as the Mind. The Unconscious in the pre-Freudian philosophy was a vague, speculative theory. With Freud the conception has passed from the region of speculation to the region of a scientific induction based on an abundant array of collated and co-ordinated observations. Well might Coué make the apt comparison and say: 'When the Conscious and the Unconscious are in the ring, it is the Unconscious which lays low its opponent every time and all the time.'

Once we have become aware of the illimitable territory and unimaginable potency of the Unconscious, we cease to attach value to any teaching that is the pure outcome of our *conscious* sense-perceptions. A disciple of Buddha, therefore, may to all outward appearance succeed in carrying out the Master's teaching regarding *Nirodha Dukkha* by driving out of his own *conscious* life and individuality all the manifold desires, emotional cravings and futile yearnings which beset the path and obsess the mind of ordinary men and women of the world. But the fact of the desires and cravings and yearnings being eliminated from the conscious life of an individual does not necessarily mean that they have been eliminated, much less eradicated from his larger sub-conscious self. For aught we know those repressed desires and frustrated passions,

those conquered cravings, and checkmated yearnings might have been only shifted from one stratum of Consciousness to another a little lower down, which tops the vast and limitless under-world of the Unconscious. In other words, they might have been transferred from the lowermost stratum of the Conscious to the uppermost stratum of the Sub-conscious. The psycho-analytic investigations into the cause of various forms of *neuroses* have proved this abundantly—namely, that when natural desires and emotional excitements are checked and controlled, they are not by any means eliminated, much less eradicated, but only suppressed or, what is worse, repressed and driven underground into the sub-soil of the Conscious, where they vainly simmer and sizzle till, finding a weak spot or a circuitous channel of escape in the upper repressive layer, they break out in various forms of *neuroses*. Likewise, all the outwardly eliminated desires and frustrated emotional cravings of a Buddhist Bhikku may find a secure lodging in his sub-conscious self, ever ready to burst up at an unguarded moment in some form or other of *neurosis*, unless those repressed desires and frustrated cravings have been transformed and transfigured, in a word, *sublimated* into the nobler pursuits of life, such as art and literature, research and invention, exploration and humanitarianism.

This leads us to the Fourth Noble Truth of Buddha—namely, the Way of the Cessation of *Dukkha*. But before we take it up in the following

chapter, let us summarize the result of our inquiry into the Third Noble Truth of Buddha. Constituted as are the faculties of human beings on the eternal principle of Duality there never was nor can there ever be an entire Cessation of *Dukkha*, much less of its subtler servitor—*Tanha*. However, *Tanha* can be successfully repressed for a longer or shorter period, and pushed down into the region of the Sub-conscious. If for any reason the repressive control is relaxed, *tanha* is bound to surge up and find expression in some form or other of *neurosis*, unless it be permanently sublimated into the nobler channels of art, research, and other purely humanistic pursuits.



THE WAY OF ESCAPE

'The ultimate goal of Buddhism is to untie
the Knot of Existence and find a Way of Escape.'

Rhys Davids.

CHAPTER XVI

THE WAY OF ESCAPE

SAITH the Master: 'There are two extremes, O monks, which he who has taken to discipleship ought not to follow: a life given to the pleasures of the senses, because it is a low, profitless and heathenish way of finding satisfaction, and a life given to self-mortification, because it is painful and equally ignoble and unprofitable. By avoiding both these extremes has the *Tathagata* come to the Middle Path (*Madhyama Pratipada*), which leads to insight, wisdom, knowledge, peace, and *nibbana*.'

What is this Middle Path?

It is *Arya Ashtanga Margam*—the Noble Eightfold Path.

As we noticed at the end of the last chapter there could be no lasting cessation of *dukkha* any more than of its *agent provocateur*, *tanha*, which is apt to surge up through various devious channels, when the repressive control is relaxed, and to manifest itself in definite neurotic disorders, unless it is permanently mastered by the sublimation of the repressed desires and emotional cravings.

How is this sublimation of the repressed desires and emotional cravings effected? By *Arya Ashtanga Margam* or the Noble Eightfold Path.

What is this Noble Eightfold Path and what is its object?

It is the Buddhistic way of reaching the summit of spiritual development attainable by Man. The Path, though long, narrow, and very exhausting, being uphill throughout, is nevertheless well made and well graded. It is beset with real and imaginary difficulties and illusions, as all paths leading to the pinnacle of attainment must be. This road of strict morality and spiritual illumination is one of practical experience and individual realization which each wayfarer must tread for himself, alone and unsupported. As it is said in *The Voice of the Silence*: 'Thou canst not travel on the Path before thou hast become the Path itself.' No man can presume to be a Buddhist by merely accepting and interesting himself in the teachings of Buddha, if he is not at the same time actually treading the Eightfold Path. The Eightfold Path is an embodiment of the morality and practical wisdom of Buddhism, and in Buddhism the moral life is no mere adjunct but its very core and essence. Rightly does the great Buddhiologist, Lakshmi Narasu, say: 'He who has merely understood the *Dhamma* but has not shaped his life and thought in accordance with its spirit is like one who having read a book on cookery imagines that he has eaten the viands described in the book.'

Buddhism, be it remembered, is not an end in itself, but only a means to an end. It is not like Christianity a hope and an aspiration after a

state, but an effort and a method of attaining a certain definite state of thought and action. So the Eightfold Path is a practical method of salvation, not by emotion, but by enlightenment, and its three stages are: Morality, Mind-culture, Wisdom. The Path may be regarded from the positive and negative points of view. Negatively it brings about a state of dispassion by the gradual elimination of the craving for sensuous pleasures of every kind and degree; positively it leads to pure compassion by the cultivation of a selfless love for all that lives. In the combination of the two lies the Emancipation of Man, his complete Liberation from the Wheel of Re-Births.

Hence the Path is both simple and profound, simple in the clarity of its principles, profound in that its precepts rest on no external power or Agency, divine or human, but on the bedrock of Law, natural and immutable. The Path knows no authority save the Universal Law of which it is the manifested code. There is here, therefore, no question of the will of God, because the Path is a rational system of self-control, self-knowledge, and self-development, a well-planned, graduated process or moral evolution unfolding that Universal Law. Verily, the Buddhist 'lives by Law.' Completely knowing it and implicitly obeying it, and daily practising it, the Buddhist lives without fear and without regret.

We have up to now commented on the Path but have not said what it consists of. What is the Noble Eightfold Path? No two Buddhist scholars

have agreed to translate the eight Pali terms by identical English equivalents, for the simple reason that each term represents a concept only to be fully understood by the 'ever open eye' of *Buddhi*, which is the faculty of intuition and spiritual perception in Buddhism. Briefly and simply stated the Eightfold Path consists of: Right Belief, Right Aspiration, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Living, Right Effort, Right Thought, and Right Meditation. If a little quiet consideration is given to the Path it will be found that it is a coherent, graduated code of ethics, in which each step is complete in itself and does naturally, but need not necessarily, follow the one before it.

(1) *Sammā Ditthi*.

The history of man is a record of his beliefs more than of his doings; and his doings, apart from the satisfaction of his physiological needs, are pure reflexes of his beliefs. Consequently, his age-long inheritance of irrational fears, cruel practices, and gross superstitions is the natural and inevitable product of his wrong ideas and erroneous beliefs. It is, therefore, natural that the Master should have taught *Right Belief* as the first step of the Noble Eightfold Path.

(2) *Sammā Sankappo*.

Again, motive decides the attitude of mind and goes to form aspiration, and the intellectual

stimulus to motive is belief. Hence only Right Belief can lead man to *Right Aspiration*.

(3) *Sammâ Vacha*.

Mere beliefs and aspirations, however right, would be of little avail if not translated into practices which can secure the end in view. The *vis inertiae* of mankind cannot be overcome by mere aspiration. The inner life of an individual can only become manifest when it energizes into the external world of activity. Consequently, Right Aspiration must find expression in *Right Speech*. And Right Speech according to the Master's teaching is 'to abstain from falsehood, backbiting, harsh language, and frivolous talk.'

(4) *Sammâ Kammanto*.

Right Speech again cannot rest satisfied with merely giving expression to right aspiration but must go further and find objective manifestation in Right Action which to put it in the words of the Master is 'the doing of all that is good and noble and in the avoidance of all that is ignoble and subversive of the higher life.' In one sense, Right Action is the key-note of the Eightfold Path, since Buddhism is, as we noticed before, pre-eminently a religion of action and active realization rather than of ideals and passive belief. Action is twofold, positive and negative, what we deliberately do and what we deliberately refrain from doing. The positive aspect is expressed in *Dana* which combines at once all that St. Paul

meant by 'Christian Charity' and 'Good Works.' *Dana* consists in a kindly helpful attitude to all that lives and breathes. It is essentially active and dynamic and may be described as the Buddhistic equivalent of the ethical triad of good thought, good word, good deed of Zoroaster. In its negative aspect, Right Action is expressed in *Pancha Sila*, the Five Precepts or vows to abstain from taking life, stealing, sensuality, slander, and intoxicating drinks and drugs. But the Master took special care to teach that these five prohibitory injunctions apply equally to the invisible functioning of the mind as to the mere visible action of the body. Homicidal intention is equivalent to murder in the world of spirit and a slanderous thought is as harmful to its thinker as any spoken word. Moreover, it is possible to get drunk on mere excitement; misappropriation of any kind, even though it may wear the cloak of custom and convention, is theft, pure and simple; and centuries before Christ did, Buddha proclaimed: 'Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.'

(5) *Sammā Ajivo.*

Right Action, both positive and negative, whether of the mind or the body is not enough in itself but must eventuate in making a man dependent on his own exertions for his livelihood which, however, must not be incompatible with the Buddhistic ideals of life.

But what is Right Living according to the Buddhistic ideals of life?

What may be a right mode of livelihood to one man may be utterly wrong to another. For instance, the mode of livelihood which Buddha adopted for himself and prescribed to the *Bhikkhu*—namely, of taking a begging-bowl each morning and walking through the villages collecting a handful of grain from door to door—that is, *living upon public charity*,¹ would be repugnant to a healthy-minded Westerner and should be so even to a self-respecting Easterner, even though the *Bhikkhu* made it a point to pay back his obligations to the community by serving it, to the best of his ability.

(6) *Sammā Vayamo.*

With merely performing Right Action and taking to a Right Mode of Making a Living the true disciple of the Blessed One cannot rest satisfied, but must ever strive to conquer the cold, dreary, icy heights of moral grandeur and intellectual enlightenment by *Right Effort*.

Right Effort consists in practising *sammapadana*—that is, in heroically mastering the passions: firstly, by making a clean sweep of all evil that is already in one's mind and heart, and keeping a vigilant eye that no fresh evils surreptitiously find entrance into them; secondly, by

¹ 'Up to the very last the Buddha himself closely adhered to the Rule he laid down for his monks—namely, when the rainy season was over, of wandering about from place to place, living upon public charity.'—Dahlke's *Essays*, p. 12.

steadily enlarging the sphere of one's benevolent activities, and systematically cultivating one's will-power to such a pitch as to acquire a perfect self-mastery. Moral advice may be helpful and so may be moral convictions, but without self-control and long self-training it is not possible to concentrate one's mind on right objects and utilize one's accumulated energy for the right purpose.

(7) *Sammā Sati*.

As it is not possible either to will or make an effort independent of thinking, Right Effort must of necessity be accompanied by *Right Thinking* or Right Concentration of Mind. The mind, as we know, is the *fons et origo* of all that is. It is the mind that commands, it is the mind that contrives. It is the mind that creates joys and sorrows, hopes and fears, the various 'complexes' and the many 'inhibitions' of modern psychology.

Mind is the master-power that moulds and makes
And man is mind, and evermore he takes
The tool of thought, and shaping what he wills,
Brings forth a thousand joys, a thousand ills.

Not a father nor a mother can do so much as one's mind. If only the mind be applied to that which is right, then right must necessarily follow as the day the night. As the Enlightened One once said: 'All penances and austerities will be worse than useless even when practised for a lifetime if the mind is not unweariedly concentrated on the right objective.' *Chittadhino dharma dharmadhino bodhihi*—on the Mind depends the

practice of *dharma*, and on the practice of *dharma* depends the attainment of *bhodi*, or intuitive wisdom. Hence, *bhavana*, which is the discipline and evolution of the mind by its deliberate control and exercise—that is, *sati* or mindfulness in its widest sense—is a vital factor in the treading of the Eightfold Path. A true disciple of Buddha, consequently, must always possess *Sammā Sati* or Right Mindfulness. Only by its exercise will it be possible for him to acquire transcendental wisdom or divine intuition (*panna*). Says Buddhagosa, in his *Visuddhi-magga*: '*Panna* is manifold and really inexplicable. Any attempt made to explain it exhaustively would both fail of its purpose and tend to still greater confusion.' We shall, therefore, confine ourselves to the meaning here intended—namely, intuitive wisdom, which is Knowledge in all its manifold bearings tested by wide personal Experience and one's own deep Insight into things. By Insight is meant the intuitive power to grasp the central realities of all things that be: by Knowledge a complete understanding of the law of cause and effect, of the real nature of body (*kaya*) and mind (*chitta*), of pleasure and pain (*veddna*), and of the true relations (*yathabhutam*) of all things (*dhamma*) in the universe.

(8) *Sammā Samadhi*.

Knowledge and Insight are thus of the highest value to the *bhodhisattva*, yet they will fail of their main objective if they lead, as they naturally

would, to an ever-changing state of thought and purpose. To avoid this possibility, a state of mind full of peace and restfulness is needed. This need is anticipated and provided for by *Sammā Samadhi* or *Right Meditation*, which is the last stage of the Noble Eightfold Path and prelude to the *summum bonum* of Buddhism, *Nibbana*.

JHANA

In the last stage of the Noble Eightfold Path, *Jhana*, of which we spoke in an earlier chapter, plays an important part.

What is *Jhana*?

Jhana is a state of serene contemplation on the facts of life from the loftiest point of view. It is the highest of the Six *Paramitas* or Perfections: the other five being Charity, Morality, Resignation, Zeal, and Meditation. In *Jhana* the utter annihilation of the idea of 'self' is attained and the ecstatic union with Reality is experienced. This ecstatic union with Reality is *Samadhi*. It is a mystic state of spiritual rapture attained by completely eliminating all sense of *separative* actuality by continuously meditating on *unifying* Reality. *Samadhi* is superior to meditation inasmuch as the three factors of meditation—the mind of the individual, the object of meditation, and the relationship between these two—are transcended. *Samma Samadhi*, therefore, forms a vital element of *Jhana*.

Jhana is manifested in four emotional states. A state of pure joy and gladness, the outcome of a life of seclusion given to reflection and investigation. Secondly, a state of great elation and unruffled calm; thirdly, a state of total absence of all passion and prejudice, and lastly, of complete self-possession and absolute tranquillity. Be it noted that *Jhana* as practised by the Buddhist *Bhikkhu* is not a method of losing one's self-consciousness in All-Consciousness, but the subjective method of developing one's own consciousness in a particular direction. It is thus a self-directed purposive eradication of the sense of one's own detached self with a view to carry on a contemplative investigation of all things dispassionately. In other words, it is an earnest and strenuous endeavour to train one's mind and expand one's imagination to such a pitch that one eventually comes into possession of the complete knowledge of the right and fitting place of each living coloured piece in the grand animated mosaic of Nature—a knowledge which leads to the adjustment of one's thoughts and ideals, intents and actions in such a way as to harmonize completely with that grand mosaic scheme of Nature's. Buddhist *Jhana*, therefore, must not be confounded with the Brahmanical *Yoga* which is largely physical and partly hypnotic, being a kind of pathological disturbance arising from a self-created illusion of having lost one's self-consciousness in All-Consciousness. While the Brahman *yogi* endeavours to become absorbed in the

Universal Brahman, the Buddhistic *bhōdisattva* attempts to realize by contemplation the self-devoid character of all things that be (*sarva-dharma anupalamoha cunyata*).

Though *Jhana* unaided contains vast possibilities within itself, its power is increased infinitely when practised with *panna* or divine intuition. When these two go hand in hand, then and only then the mind is completely freed not only from worldly disquietude of all kinds but also from *atmamoha*, self-love, which is the mother of every species of egoism.

SANNOJANAS

The treading of the Eightfold Path, though it enables the *bhōdisattva* to acquire self-knowledge and self-control, does not remove the Impediments (*sannojanas*) which lie across the Path. There are ten of these Impediments or Fetters, which in reality are certain erroneous mental conceptions and desires that have to be cast off one by one as the Path is followed to the goal.

Usually the Ten Fetters are grouped and spoken of as four stages of the Noble Path to Liberation. The first stage (*srotapanna*) comprises three Fetters, the first of which is *sak-kayaditthi*, the delusion of a permanent individualized self, separate from all other selves. The second is *vichikichcha* which denies all possibility of solving the problem of existence.

It is a kind of mental vacillation leading to doubt and scepticism. It is not so much an attitude of mind as an internal maladjustment denoting psychic instability in the individual afflicted with the impediment. The third is *silabbata-paramasa* which is a belief in the efficacy of rites and purificatory ceremonies. The Master set such high value on the overcoming of these three preliminary obstacles that the *Dhammapada* says their conquest was so worthy an achievement that it was better 'than going to heaven, or possessing universal empire in this world or lordship over all worlds.' Success achieved in the first stage does not assure one of not lapsing back into the old bad ways unless one enters of set purpose the second stage (*sakadagamin*) and overcomes the two other impediments of the tyranny of the senses (*kamacchando*) and the malice and ill-will towards one's fellow-men (*patiga* or *vyapado*).

When all these Five Fetters have been broken completely and done away with once and for ever, so that there is no possibility of the least love of self or ill-feeling arising in one's heart towards any single living object, only then can the *Bhikkhu* step on to the third stage of *anagamin* of 'one who will never return' to this world. On this stage one frees oneself from two more fetters of *ruparaga* and *aruparaga*, which consist of a craving (*raga*) for material (*rupa*) and immaterial (*arupa*) enjoyments of this and the other world.

When one has broken these two fetters, there is no possibility of going 'backward and one is

now fit to enter the final stage of *arahat*, 'the worthy one,' where one will have to cast off the last three fetters of pride and self-esteem (*mano*), self-righteousness (*uddhaccam*), and ignorance (*avijja*) of the true nature of every phase of cosmic phenomenon.

When the *arahat* breaking through the last and strongest of these ten fetters, *avijja*, comes to the end of the Noble Eightfold Path, he will have acquired such clear perception and such perfect control over his mind and imagination that all things will appear to him in their true perspective and right proportion. He who has attained such all-embracing knowledge and enlightenment and has learnt to see things in their true relations, no longer looks upon the world (*prapancha*) with any other feelings than those of transcendent bliss and peace unutterable, where pervades the all-enfolding Spirit of Love and Wisdom.

Now that we have dealt at length with the fourth and last of the Four Noble Truths, let us consider if it is a whole and absolute truth or only a partial and relative, as we found its three sister-truths were. While discussing the third Noble Truth we came to the conclusion that there could never be any real but only apparent cessation of *dukkha* and of its so-called cause and originator, *tanha*, so long as the physical and psychical constitution of the world is what it is

and the functioning of the human mind is based on the eternal Principle of Duality. Naturally, therefore, the *Margam* or Path leading to the Cessation of *Dukkha* could only apparently but never really lead to the elimination of *dukkha* from one's life. For the sake of argument we even conceded that if a *Bhikkhu*—scrupulously following the eight steps of the *Margam* and boldly overcoming the ten Impediments that bar his way—attain the goal, he will indeed at the end of his laudable achievement have succeeded in eliminating his self-created *dukkha* for which he might in justice be held responsible. But what about the *dukkha* which entered, nay forced itself into his life by the folly, and ill-will, greed and ambition, incompetence and error of judgment of his fellow-men or by the apparently perverse working of Nature herself? What, for instance, of a man or a woman who was incapacitated for life by some natural calamity or through the greed, malevolence, or criminal negligence and incompetence of his fellow human beings? To give an instance near at hand—my own sister has been for the last ten years lying paralysed with her spinal-cord lacerated as the result of a motor accident which was due to the negligence and incompetence of the driver. How would the Noble Eightfold Path help her in eliminating the *dukkha* of physical pain and the consequent mental unrest which through no fault of hers have permanently and irremediably come and taken possession of her life and which she

will have to bear with patient courage and uncomplaining resignation to the end of her days? The karmic theory may provide her with a rational though not convincing explanation, with enduring but not satisfying consolation. The karmic theory for certain cannot bring about the cessation of her *dukkha* of physical pain and discomfort which is the definite promise Buddha makes to all who follow his Noble Eightfold Path. The promise being clear and unequivocal, it is idle to speak in consolatory phrases as the noted Buddhologist, Lakshmi Narasu, does when he says:

The cause of all Sorrow (*dukkha*) lies at the very source; it lies in the unconscious blind impulses with which life starts. When these blind impulses with which life starts are checked and controlled, the wrong appetences born of them will no longer have sway. With the removal of these wrong appetences, the wrong perception begotten by them will be wiped out of our lives. . . . It is therefore clear that *the fate of each one of us rests in his own hands*. If life is associated with suffering (*dukkha*), *no being has a right to blame another*, much less *Dharmakāya*. It is not *Dharmakāya* that permits beings to suffer innocently for conditions which they did not create themselves. *Life's suffering is life's own doing*. He who knows the nature of life must not be afraid of suffering; he must bear its ills nobly. No one can turn aside the law which moves to righteousness. But one's personality becomes more vivid as it enters more and more closely into oneness with *Dharmakāya*. If one avails oneself of the light of *Dharmakāya*, the Essence of Buddhahood, and orders one's life conformable to the Dharma by following the Noble Eightfold Path, one escapes the suffering (*dukkha*) that is associated with life and arrives at the blissful haven of *Nirvana*.¹

¹ *The Essence of Buddhism*, pp. 356, 357.

All this is good ratiocination and sound Buddhism, but it is contrary to common knowledge and daily experiences of life. For one thing such ratiocination has no bearing on my sister's case nor on those of thousands of other innocent victims like her—victims, for instance, of air-raids who, through no fault of theirs, lie mutilated and crippled for life in hospitals in Spain and all over China at the present moment. To tell these sufferers, as Lakshmi Narasu so facilely does, 'Life's suffering is life's own doing. No one has a right to blame another,' is only to add insult to injury. It will be argued that one should not adjudicate the worth and value of a truth by exceptions, remembering that exceptions often prove the rule. This is true enough, but one must also remember that a truth which is a whole truth and nothing but the truth can have no exceptions whatever. As soon as it has but a single exception, that instant the truth loses its wholeness or absoluteness and becomes a relative or partial truth. The Eightfold Path, though a partial truth, is nevertheless a noble path worthy of being trodden by every faithful disciple of Buddha wishing to tackle the problem of existence in the highest and noblest way possible.



THE BEATITUDE OF NIBBANA

‘That State of Peace, *Nibbana*, wherein the roots
Of ever fresh re-births are all destroyed, and greed
And hatred and delusion all have ceased:
That Thrice-blest State from lust of future life set free
That changeth not, can ne’er be led to change.’

Metta Sutta.

CHAPTER XVII

THE BEATITUDE OF NIBBANA

As we noticed in the previous chapter when the *Bhikkhu* has traversed the whole length of the Noble Eightfold Path patiently, persistently, unregrettingly and broken through the Ten Fetters of life he becomes an *arahat*, a worthy one, reaches the goal of Buddhistic ideals, and attains the *summum bonum* of Buddhism—the blessed state of *Nibbana*. No term in Buddhism has evoked such controversy among its most renowned exponents as *nibbana*, and no two Buddhologists are agreed upon the true meaning and exact connotation of that thrice-blest state. In the Upanishads and the philosophical works of the Brahmans, we come across such terms as *amritta*, *moksha*, *mukti*, *nihcreyasa*, *kaivalya*, *apavarga* as Sanskrit equivalents for the English term, salvation. It is only in the ancient Pali and Sanskrit works on Buddhism that the word *nirvana* is employed to denote the grand goal and objective of every advanced human soul. In other words, what is *moksha* to the Brahman, what is *Tao* to the Chinese idealist, what is *Fana-la-fana* to the Sufi mystic, what is New Birth to the Christian monk, that is *Nibbana* to the devout

Buddhist. Whoever, therefore, wishes to become acquainted with the deepest longing in the heart of a devout Buddhist must seek to know the true meaning and to understand the varied implications of *nibbana*, not metaphysically, since speculation of any kind is banned in Buddhism, but practically as a practical man of the world.

In the first place, it must be remembered that *nibbana* in Buddhism, as the New Birth and the Kingdom of Heaven in Christianity, is a state of consciousness which may be realized and must be realized, if it is to be realized at all, here and now, while we are living and breathing on earth. Buddha himself declared that he had attained the blessed state of *nibbana* before he started on his great evangelical mission. Not only the Master but many of his arahat-disciples are said to have attained *nibbana* while alive. Consequently, the first thing we must bear in mind is that *nibbana* is a state of consciousness pure and simple, and more that it is a state which can only be attained while alive on earth and not after death.

In the second place, we must guard against two false views that prevail commonly concerning *nibbana*. The first one is that *nibbana* is a state in which the individual soul is completely and finally absorbed in the Universal Soul, as in the Vedanta Philosophy of the Brahmans. Sir Edwin Arnold expresses this Vedantic thought most beautifully and poetically when he says in his *Light of Asia*: 'The Dewdrop slips into the Shining Sea.' The second false view is that

nibbana is a state of final dissolution and complete cessation of all worldly activities (*chittavritti-nirodha*), in which love, affection, sympathy, and everything else of life, both worth possessing and not worth possessing, get disintegrated to total extinction.

The first view is obviously false for it contradicts the basic conceptions of Buddhism. As we noticed in a previous chapter, Buddha denied the bare possibility of an individual soul or the ego as well as of an All-Soul or the Absolute. How then could he teach communion with or absorption into a mysterious all-pervading Spirit such as the Vedantic Brahman is? In the *Tevijja Sutta* the Master likens those who believe in and seek union with Brahman to a man who builds a staircase at each junction of two cross-roads and then ascending the stairs fancies he is going up a castle which has no existence except in his fervid imagination. The second view, that *nibbana* is dissolution and cessation of all worldly activities, is obviously wrong, since the active evangelical career of the Enlightened One gives the lie direct to it. As we noticed before, Buddha attained *bodhi* and the blessed state of *nibbana* at the age of thirty-five and spent the remaining forty-five years of his life in preaching his *dhamma* and helping his fellow-men. *Nibbana* cannot, therefore, be simple dissolution or complete cessation of all activities. If then *nibbana* is not extinction pure and simple nor complete absorption into the Eternal, what is it?

The Pali word *nibbana* is derived from the Sanskrit *nirvana*, which itself is derived from two other Sanskrit words, *nir* (absence or without) and *vata* (wind or air). When later on the word *nirvata* came to be used exclusively with reference to *desire* instead of *wind*, the suffix *ta* changed into *na*. Consequently, *nirvana* literally means without desire, or freedom from desire, or the extinguishment of all desires of life. To understand the import and etymological significance of the term we must call to mind the simile of fire and flame so constantly made use of by Buddha himself and so frequently found in Buddhist scriptures. Saith the Blessed One on a memorable occasion:

The whole world is in flames. All things, O *Bhikkhus*, are on fire. The eye is on fire, forms are on fire, eye-consciousness is on fire, and so is the ear, the nose, the tongue, the sense of the touch. The mind, too, is on fire, thoughts are on fire, and mind-consciousness and impressions received by the mind and the sensations—pleasant, unpleasant, and neutral—that arise from those impressions are all likewise on fire.

And with what are they on fire? I say with the fire of *raga*, *dosa*, and *moha* (lust, hatred, and illusion) and of birth, old age, death, sorrow, lamentation, misery, grief, and despair.

When the true disciple realizes this fact of existence, he ceases to attach any value to the eye, forms, eye-consciousness, to impressions received by the eye and for sensations arising therein; and to the ear, the nose, the tongue, and to the sense of touch, and to the mind and mind-consciousness, impressions and sensations. And so he is divested of *tanha* (craving), and thereby he is freed from attachment and is aware that he is freed, and he

knows that Becoming is exhausted, that he has lived the pure life, that he has done what it behoved him to do, and that he has put off mortality for ever and thereby attained naturally and inevitably to the state of *arahatta* and of *nibbana*.

Nibbana is the central theme of Buddha's teaching. It is, in fact, the great prize which he holds up before the eyes of his disciples, every one of whom is urged to acquire it. To get a correct idea of this *summum bonum* of Buddhistic creed, I have been studying a dozen of the best known authors, some of whom are world-recognized authorities on Buddhism; but I do not think any one of them gives as clear an idea of *nibbana* or in as compact a form as the Master does himself in the above celebrated *Sermon on Fire*. It is evident from this Sermon that *nibbana* to be fully known must be experienced. No one who has not found himself on the plane of *nibbana* can ever actually know its true nature. For one thing, there can be no 'striving after *nibbana*.' There is only a striving for the complete elimination of craving (*tanha*). Upon the cessation of this latter, *nibbana* follows or rather prevails as naturally and as inevitably as darkness prevails the moment light is extinguished or withdrawn. Or, to put it differently, as fire is 'extinguished through lack of fuel,' so is an individual's *dukkha* extinguished when no longer fed with the fuel of *tanha* (craving).¹ This is what the venerable

¹ 'As the lamp goes out that is no longer supplied with oil, so that embodied being expires which no longer from any quarter receives food.'—Paul Dahlke's *Buddhist Essays*, p. 88.

Nagasena meant when he told King Milinda: 'Cessation is *Nibbana*.' From this it is evident that *nibbana* is something personal and individual. As every man on account of his *tanha* and *avidya* (ignorance) creates his own individual world of *dukkha*, so also every man brings about through *vidya* (knowledge) and complete elimination of *tanha* the extinguishment of his own individual world of *dukkha* and thereby creates his own *nibbana*, which emerges automatically on the complete cessation of *dukkha*. Just as Rest must necessarily prevail the moment Movement of every kind ceases, likewise *Nibbana* must necessarily prevail the moment *dukkha* based on *tanha* ceases. *Nibbana*, consequently, is the only thing in Buddhism which does not arise, as every other thing in the world does, as the effect of a cause, and which as cause again does not give rise to any effect. It stands above, or rather outside the Law of Cause and Effect; not, however, as an absolute, like God, but only relatively as one who has ceased to have all relations. Saith the venerable Nagasena: 'Of *Nibbana* we cannot say that it has arisen or that it has not arisen, or that it can arise; that it is past, or future, or present.'

If it has not arisen, it is obvious it cannot be subject to transiency. And so it is not. It is the one thing in Buddhism which does not consist of a continual Becoming, which is not conceived of as made up of separate parts (*Sankara*). It is, therefore, unchangeable and eternal, free from all admixture of *dukkha*.

It is said that in *nibbana* there is 'the absolute annihilation of man's personality, the lower separative self, the bundle of ever-changing attributes which form the outward man.'¹ It is true that in *nibbana* there is the complete extinguishment of the lower separative self, the total abandonment of all separative struggle for individual happiness and advancement, the expulsion once and for ever of all eagerness of terrestrial *tanha* (craving). But that does not imply the annihilation of personality. Annihilation of personality can occur in life only with the cessation of all consciousness, as in a swoon or in a dreamless sleep. The *Dhamma* is distinctly opposed to such annihilation of self-consciousness. *Bodhi*, which is often but a synonym for *nibbana*, is characterized by the seven qualities of zeal, wisdom, reflection, investigation, joy, peace, and tranquillity. Can these qualities be present where there is no consciousness? No doubt, in *nibbana* the normal ever-changing consciousness of Physical Separateness is annihilated or rather once and for ever sublimated into the abiding consciousness of Spiritual Oneness. 'What is *Nibbana*?' asks a well-known writer on Buddhism. '*Nibbana* is a state of ideal spiritual perfection, in which the soul, having completely detached itself—by the force of its own natural expansion—from what is individual, impermanent, and phenomenal, embraces and becomes one with the Universal, the Eternal, and the Real. In other words, the

¹ *What is Buddhism* ? p. 151.

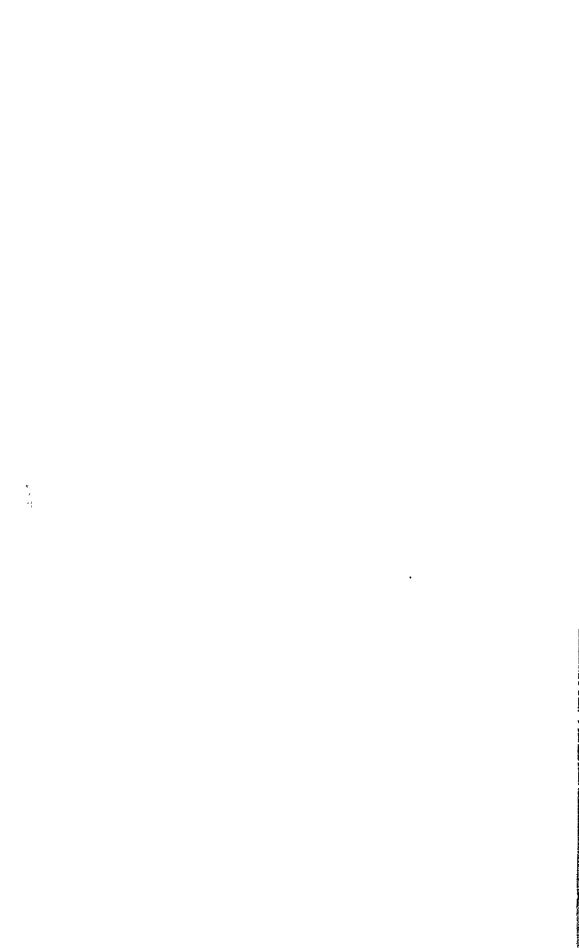
essence of *nibbana* is the finding of the ideal self, in and through the attainment to Oneness—living, conscious Oneness—with the All and Divine.’¹

In such a complete sublimation of the sense of Physical Separateness into the abiding consciousness of Spiritual Oneness with the All and Divine, would not, it will be asked, the sense of personality be also absorbed and lost? Apparently such would be the case. What really happens, however, is that only the grosser side of the old individuality, consisting of exclusive, bigoted, egoistic, idiosyncratic, narrow-minded, *tanha*-ridden personalism fades away, leaving behind the nobler side of that same old individuality consisting of all-inclusive, catholic, transcendental, larger-visioned, bigger-souled, *tanhaless* universalism, intact and unaffected. In *nibbana*, therefore, the best side of the original personality is neither lost nor disintegrated but only expanded into world-consciousness. In *nibbana* we sense the all-pervading Law of Rhythm and come *en rapport* with the Universal Sensitiveness inherent in all things that be. In it we realize that all is, as in some piece of art, ‘toil co-operant to an end,’ and are led to subscribe to that fine conceit of the poet that ‘thou canst not stir a flower without troubling of a star.’ ‘The Oneness of life is the Final Mystery of Things,’ says that eminent Indian scientist, Sir Jagadish Bose. ‘In it the classifying barriers are thrown down between groups of men and phenomena; and all, plant and animal, appear as

¹ Edmond Holmes's *Creed of Buddha*, p. 199.

a Multiform Unity in a Single Ocean of Being. This vision crushes out of Man all his old self-sufficiency—all that kept him unconscious of the Great Pulse that beats through the Universe.'

Nibbana again is the magic transmuter of the lead of earth into the gold of spirit. In it the life of the Flesh is not broken up but transfigured into the life of the Spirit. It is in *nibbana* that we come to possess 'all-comprehensive tenderness, all-subtilizing intellect,' and thereby learn to feel the infinitude in human nature, and perceive as we never perceived before the deep truth and living significance of that fundamental Buddhistic belief: 'Whatever happens to another happens to oneself, and whatever happens to oneself happens to another.' In *nibbana* finally lies the true Emancipation of the Self—that is, the liberation of the Ego from the gyves and fetters of the petty cares and sordid appetites of one's *tanha*-ridden individuality, with the consequent coming into possession of one's world-embracing personality with its larger ambitions, higher hopes, and nobler passions. To kill the conceit of individualized, Separative Self, as a thing distinct and apart, and then to surge up and seize the All-Embracing Universal Everywhere has been the sole objective of *Nibbana* and the one eternal pursuit of Buddhism through the ages.



THE FUTURE OF BUDDHISM

'The ideas of Buddha are eminently congenial to the scientific tone of Western thought; and the day will come when the Conception of Life which they embody will be accepted in the West as the sanest and truest conception that the mind of man has yet devised and as the only stable foundation on which to build—what will surely be the fittest monument to Buddha's greatness—the Science of the Soul.'

Edmond Holmes.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE FUTURE OF BUDDHISM

No matter how hurriedly a reader may have gone through the foregoing seventeen chapters and what value he may have come to set on the teaching and personality of Buddha, he could not have failed to remark that here indeed was a man of giant intellect and penetrating vision, who, brushing aside all human emotionalism and age-long sentimentalism, dared to enthrone cold Reason in his heart and, in consequence, left the world a system of philosophy and a set of ideals which were unique in their day and are still unparalleled in the history of the religious thought of the world. So much so indeed that one may safely venture to place all the great religions of the world on one side and on the other Buddhism in all its cold, exclusive grandeur without being charged with over-estimating its worth or undervaluing their importance. And this for the simple reason that there is no real antithesis or rivalry between it and them. All other religions have their foundations laid in the Realm of Faith and Revelation, while Buddhism alone has its laid in the Domain of Reason and Actuality; and Actuality has no antithesis, because it is itself the

union of antithesis. Buddhism being thus a religion of Reason and Actuality, one would expect it to follow the principle of Evolution and believe in and uphold the fundamental law of nature—the Struggle for Existence. But it does not. On the contrary, Buddhism controverts this fundamental law of nature and radically reverses it into its own basic commandment—‘Struggle for No-More-Existence.’ This commandment, be it remembered, is at once the signpost to the supreme goal of Buddhism and the guiding clue to the Buddhistic thought and theory of life. With profound truth does that great Buddhiologist, Paul Dahlke, say: ‘That act which leads to the *Abrogation of All Action*—that is the greatest act of all in Buddhism.’ Whatever does not lead to ‘the abrogation of all action,’ directly or indirectly, does not come within the ambit of Buddha-thought. In other words, ‘Life is not worth the seizing, Life is not worth the seizing!’ was Buddha’s daily orison and holy psalmody which at all times all through his messianic career he reiterated in the presence of his immediate disciples and left as a precious heritage to the world at large. Saith the Enlightened One: ‘Others shall seize everything with both hands and relinquish with difficulty: we *shall not* seize anything with both hands and *shall* relinquish it with ease.’

All who would examine the problem of Life must first remove from it the problem of Existence. It is the mixing up of these two fundamentally

divergent facts of Creation that has warped Buddhistic thought and ideals from beginning to end, as indeed it has ordinary human thinking and reasoning through the ages. By Existence we here comprehend the body and all that serves to supply its needs and to keep its complicated machinery going for a fixed period of time. By Life, on the other hand, we comprehend an indestructible thing—something that goes on and on beyond the body and the element of time—the impulse that we vaguely call the soul, the spirit; in other words, the complete intellectual process comprehending all the varied activities of the Human Mind. As the Body is the poor relation of the Mind, its mere servant and vehicle, so is Existence the poor relation of Life, its mere servant and vehicle. It follows, therefore, that unless we make a clear distinction between Life and Existence all our reasoning and all our thinking will be in vain.

From primitive times one traces in the struggle for Existence the origination and later the elaboration of every phase of human social organization. Whether it be agricultural or commercial, political or scientific organization, all normal human activity tends but in one direction—the Service of the Body. From this one might justifiably conclude that our sociological structure exists mainly, if not solely, to feed, clothe, and protect the delicate human mechanism. Ordinarily the efforts of common humanity are directed towards but one end—namely, to make human existence less difficult—to put it in Buddhistic phraseology

—to eliminate every vestige of *dukkha* from human existence. All that ministers to this end is instantly accepted as good and vitally necessary, all that does not is summarily rejected as bad and of no consequence. It has ever been found, however, that what the common run of men reject is just the very thing that serves Life and ministers to its glory. But, as always, the constant Cry of Existence by its undeviating persistency and pressing urgency succeeds in drowning the subtler and scarcely audible Calling of Life. Nevertheless, somewhere amidst all this deafening uproar of Existence, there is heard Life's still small voice—the voice that ever and anon urges one to strive, to struggle and to create something higher, nobler, and original—something more beautiful and more satisfying than the bare service of mechanical existence. Now to Life's *creative effort* it is essential that *Existence should be a struggle*, hard, painful and uncertain, full of failures and disappointments, sorrow and suffering. To put it shortly in Buddhistic phraseology, *Existence should be full of dukkha*. It is also essential that this struggle should endure and continue endlessly, for it is *not* by doing away with the danger and difficulty, pain and penalties of earth-life but by boldly encountering and overcoming them that the mind of man evolves and his soul expands. In other words, it is by Struggle, and Struggle alone that Life is maintained and mankind advances. If in an evil moment, by some strange perversity of Nature,

the law changed and the Struggle for Existence ceased and man became ideally precise and Buddhistically perfect—that is, *dukkha*less and *tanha*less, that moment Creative Effort would automatically cease and with its cessation Life would cease too. Why? Because *Life is Effort*. Life, therefore, is not pure *dukkha*, any more than it is transiency or becoming or illusion, as Buddha-thought makes it out to be; but an enduring thing which has an indestructible root in *dukkha* and an inexhaustible spur in *tanha* and is synonymous with Effort. Once again let it be repeated that were human perfection attainable by the mere elimination of *tanha* and the complete cessation of *dukkha*, as the Buddhists sigh and yearn and work for, Existence would have long since achieved its end and Life ceased to be. 'The essential fact about Life is Imperfection,' says H. G. Wells. 'Life that ceases to struggle away from whatever it is towards something that it isn't, is ceasing to be life.' The imperfections, failures, doubts, and dangers of Existence are, therefore, the very meat and drink of Life with the earth's legacy such as we inherit at our birth—namely, the five senses and the function of sex. On this miserly inheritance, supported by a physical mechanism which is so weak and defenceless that it must constantly be protected and fed, we must accept the Eternal Challenge of Life. Once the Challenge is accepted, we must ceaselessly wrestle and get along as best we can with imperfections, failures, doubts and dangers and

strive to extract out of them whatever of perfection, success, beliefs and security we can manage to extract for the time being. If the earth teaches us anything it is the one sure lesson that Life not only survives but thrives on the greatest stress and strain that Existence can put upon it—nay more, it survives for the very reason that stress and strain are put upon it. Remove 'Stress and Strain' from human Existence and that instant you remove Life also with them.

If agreeing with me, a reader refused to accept as true Buddha's version of Life as *Dukkha* or merely becoming or transiency or illusion, he would be straight off dubbed by the great exponents of Buddhism—ignorant. It is his *avijja*, they would say, that makes him not accept Buddha's profound conception of world-process. Witness Paul Dahlke: 'All who do not recognize this, who do not recognize that Life is Sorrow (*dukkha*)—so fail, not because Life in reality is not Sorrow (*dukkha*), but only because their Ignorance (*avijja*) prevents them from perceiving the true nature of things.'¹ It is said: 'Give a dog a bad name and hang him,' so would the modern Buddhiologists give the name of *ignoramus* and hang any one who presumed to doubt or demurred to accept the propositions about Life which their Master dogmatically laid down two thousand years ago.

It is exactly on this point that we have to find fault not only with the modern exponents of

¹ *Buddhist Essays*, p. 74.

Buddhism, but with the Master himself and the whole system of thought he propounded with such amazing assurance and cold logic. The mystery of Life is not a Problem to be solved but a Reality to be experienced, and experienced at first hand. Beware of the man or the prophet who claims to have solved the Problem of Life, who would with deadly logic build up an elaborate system of his own in which all the perplexities of our earthly existence are beautifully explained away and carefully pigeon-holed and all the controversial facts of life are neatly docketed and permanently stored away. Such a man, may he be a prophet or a philosopher, stands condemned by his own audacious claim. A boy who in his simplicity and ignorance sees magic and wonder in all things around him, to whom the shells on the beach and the animals in the zoo are objects of breathless excitement and endless curiosity, is nearer to divine truth than a great analyst or a renowned anatomist who would with unperturbed analysis and irresistible logic strip Life of its colour and passion and Nature of its warmth and wonder, and take pride in exhibiting to us their dry bones and cold tissues in ruthless dissection; and then with amazing self-assurance say that Life and Nature consist of nothing more than these dry bones and tissues of his dissection. This is exactly what our great, self-confident analyst and anatomist of human mind and consciousness does. Never a thought seems to have crossed Buddha's mind that his genius, however vast and

penetrating, and his intuition, however deep and infallible, were nevertheless human and so subject to human limitations—that with those limitations errors were apt to creep in in his reasoning just as certainly as in any other human reasoning, however profound and logical. By tacitly assuming that in himself human wisdom had attained its summit and human research its finality, that he, as the self-proclaimed Buddha or Enlightened One, by virtue of his long and single-hearted search after truth and reality, was in possession of all the knowledge and all the wisdom to which the Human Mind can lay claim or have any access, he erred grievously and undermined for ever the foundation of his whole teaching. For how can man—remember, Buddha claimed to be nothing more than man—arrogate to himself omniscience¹ and define the boundaries of human thought, feeling, and ultimate achievement! For it is this and nothing less that he attempts to do when he takes upon himself to lay down dogmatically fundamental propositions about *dukkha* and *tanha*—namely, that *Dukkham* is the sole reality in the world and *Tanham* the only activity that counts in normal human life. *Dukkham* and *Tanham* being the basic facts of creation, questions relative to them naturally go

¹ 'I do not *know* what I may appear to the world, but to myself I seem to have been only like a boy playing on the sea-shore, and diverting myself in now and then finding a smoother pebble or a prettier shell than ordinary, whilst the great Ocean of Truth lay all *undiscovered* before me.' How refreshing it is to read Newton's frank admission of relative ignorance after Buddha's tacit assumption of omniscience!

to the root of human thought and consciousness and it is impossible to answer them dogmatically without at the same time begging all other deeper questions therein involved—such as, for instance, the value and validity of all human sense-perceptions of whatever kind and degree. Buddha's propositions about *Dukkham* and *Tanham*, based as they are on his own sense-perceptions and individual experience, are at best only hypothetically valid and provisionally true, even for his own disciples or men who happen to possess Buddha's temperament and Buddha's way of thinking and feeling. This is the utmost that can be said about those propositions. To take for granted that they are true in themselves, valid to the ends of the Earth and immutable to the end of Time, as most devout disciples of Buddha proclaim them to be, is to beg every question they necessarily involve; because the moment we accept the propositions as true without qualification and without reserve, we rashly enter into an endless labyrinth of metaphysical speculation about the value and validity of human sense-perceptions as such—a labyrinth from which there is no possible exit.

While we are discussing Buddha's philosophy of life and existence, it would be worth speculating what turn the mind of Buddha would have taken had he been born a common man, one of a million and not one *in* a million. Much of his peculiar philosophy of life is the inevitable outcome of that fatal bias which, as the natural reaction to

his faulty early training and the pampered ease he was bred in, he contracted against Existence. From his exalted station he could not but trace sheer struggle, endless toil, and unredeemed misery in the common lot and daily pursuits of his fellow-men. The question is: Had Buddha been born in a poor man's hut and compelled to live amid squalor and misery from his childhood up; had he thus got used to all the hazards and hardships, the contempt and neglect which are a poor man's lot, would he have felt the bitterness and limitations of human life as acutely and realized its futility and purposelessness as grievously as he did born a prince? Again, could he have foreseen all the progress we have made in Medicine, Surgery, and Radiology for the alleviation of pain and suffering and have forecast all the advancement made in the sciences of Hygiene and Engineering for the preservation and promotion of the health and happiness of humanity, would he have been so bitter against Life as he was, would he have developed a philosophy of its renunciation and a technique of its abrogation as he did? ¹ More, would he then have enjoined his disciples to give up the pursuits of life, eradicate the element of desire, and cease yearning for human progress and more abundant life—as all

¹ 'From the very first this new teaching of Buddhism was misconceived. One corruption was perhaps inherent in its teaching. Because the world of men had as yet *no sense of the continuous progressive effort of Life*. It was easy, therefore, to slip from the idea of renouncing self to the idea of renouncing active life.'—H. G. Wells's *Outline of History*, ch. xxiv, 4.

men in normal health and vigour do and for ever shall labour and yearn? 'Man is still only adolescent. His troubles are not the troubles of senility and exhaustion but of increasing and still-undisciplined strength. When we look at All History as One Process, when we see the steadfast upward struggle of life towards vision and control, then we see in their true proportions the hopes and dangers of the present time. As yet we are hardly in the earliest Dawn of Human Greatness. . . . We have dreams, we have at present undisciplined but ever-increasing power. Can we doubt that presently, our race will more than realize our boldest imaginations, that it will achieve unity and peace, that it will live, the children of our blood and lives, in a world made more splendid and lovely than any palace or garden that we know, going on from strength to strength, in an ever-widening circle of adventure and achievement? What Man has done forms but the Prelude to the things that Man has yet to do.' ¹ All the Buddhas of this and the other world shall not stay Man—despite wars, pestilence, slumps, and other obstacles, ills, and disorders—from battling his way, undismayed and undeterred, towards the Stars. Man shall always hanker after the Moon Machine!

Once while discussing the great religions of the world, the renowned Orientalist, Professor Max Müller, said that *the religion of Buddha was made for a mad-house*. A prominent Buddhologist

¹ H. G. Wells's *Short History of the World*, ch. lxvii.

took umbrage at that statement of the great Orientalist and promptly countered it by retorting that the world was indeed one extended mad-house and men, unknown to themselves, were for life confined in it and Buddhism was made to save them and get their release from it. I do not know which of the two is right, but I do know that the religion of Buddha—as generally expounded and taught by the Buddhist monks and scholars, and commonly understood and followed by the Buddhist students and laity at large—is *made for a dope-house*, because Buddhism in its philosophical aspect is a kind of dope or opiate or mental anaesthetic. Just as an opium den with a pipe of opium promises its patrons temporary relief from physical pain and mental worry, so does Buddha with his dope of 'Struggle for no-more-existence,' 'Abrogate all desires and cravings of life (*tanha*),' promise gradual deliverance from all sorrow and suffering (*dukkha*) and ultimate release from the stress and strain of existence. The only difference between the two kinds of dope is that one is material and the other mental: the one like opium promises only temporary relief, the other like *nibbana* permanent release from the identical defects and limitations, sorrow and suffering (*dukkha*) of earthly existence. This Buddhistic dope of *nibbana*—*not* as the rare few realize it but as the common many understand it, as total extinguishment of illusive human personality (*bhava*) or its complete absorption into the All-enfolding Infinity—though called by Dahlke '*the*

noblest optimism yet proclaimed to man,' is in all sober truth and reality *the most insidious pessimism yet preached to man,* and if taken in full dose by all must inevitably and logically end in a kind of spiritual suicide of the whole human race.

While we are on the subject of dope, it would be worth inquiring what a modern psycho-analyst's diagnosis of Buddha's mind would declare him to be. From his acute and lifelong sensitiveness to the sorrow and suffering of human existence a psycho-analyst would proclaim him to be a victim of a mild form of hypochondria. He would argue that every form of acute sensitiveness, no matter of what nature, ultimately and inevitably leads to a kind of Obsession. 'One thing, and one thing only, ye monks, do I declare to you: *Dukkha* and the Uprooting of *Dukkha*.' When sensitiveness has reached this stage of habitual obsession by 'One thing and one thing only,' as it had with Gautama for years before the Great Illumination came and all through his evangelical period, it is an unmistakable manifestation of *neurosis* of some kind or other. 'In Obsessional Neurosis,' says Freud, 'the patient is plagued by compulsive thoughts and actions which are invariably accompanied by a definite obsession, an *idée fixe*, and a psychopathia of some kind or another.' Gautama has been severally described as 'a negative dogmatist,' 'a philosophical nihilist,' and 'an egoistic hedonist.' In a sense to be sure he was all these, but primarily and fundamentally he was

what Freud would call 'an Obsessional Neurotic' whose obsession was 'the Demon of *Dukkha*,' whose *idée fixe* was 'the Treachery of *Tanha*,' and whose sedulously-nurtured Abhorrence of Earthly Existence had with the passage of time developed into a definite and an unmistakable *psychopathia* against Life itself.

The whole trouble of Buddhistic philosophy and Buddhistic idealism arises from the fact that Buddhism says *NAY* both to Life and Existence. Witness Dahlke:

Buddhism is the only one among all the religions of the world that is based on *Negation*, issues in *Negation*—nay more, *is Negation* itself.' ¹

The Creed of Negation is the most deadly that could be preached to any sect or race of men, since it inevitably leads to hatred of Nature and hostility to Life itself. Buddha, by constantly harping on his eternal theme of *dukkha* and *tanha* and systematically exposing to us in cold logic the crude framework of Nature and of the mind of Man, seemed to strip the world of all its warmth and wonder, and humanity of all its magic and mystery. At all events, in his systematic and organized hostility to life and earthly existence lies the sole motive force of Buddha, the only driving power behind his teaching. 'Whoso *desires* Life,' says Dahlke, 'the teaching of Buddha is *not* for him; nay more, it ought to be repugnant to him.' The people who have *no more*

¹ *Buddhistic Essays*, p. 48.

desire for Life are invariably the sick and the exhausted, the disappointed and the despondent. The Gospel of Buddha, consequently, is built on the ideals of the sick and the exhausted in mind and body. It may be trusted to give unfailing comfort and solace to the broken in spirit and a safe asylum to one beaten and bruised in the race of life. Nay more, illness and low vitality are prerequisites if its negative beliefs are to be accepted and realized, just as in Ancient Greece superabundance of rude health and animal vigour were pre-essentials for the acceptance and realizations of positive beliefs in 'the Joy of Life' and 'glory of existence.' The Gospel of Buddha being thus directed against the sound, the healthy, and the hopeful, everything well-constituted and Yea-saying, all that is high-spirited and high-hearted, full of vim and verve, life and laughter is not only patently uncongenial but positively inimical to Buddhistic genius. In a word, *Joie de vivre* would have been a meaningless expression to Buddha—who quite seriously wanted to rub laughter off the face of the world.¹ And he would have succeeded were the world a hospital. But unfortunately for Buddha the world is not a hospital. It is rather an extended battlefield, where the Fiend of Destruction ever lies in wait to reduce men's aeons of achievements into chaos and howling wilderness—if sturdy hands relax or

¹ 'It is but seldom told of the Buddha that he either smiled or wept. It is only legend that says that the Buddha laughed.'—Dahlke's *Essays*, p. 9.

stout hearts quail and let things slide and go their own wild way. For one thing Nature will never long tolerate a garden of lotus-eaters. She is not for the dreamers of dreams nor for the dealers in negative ideals. Most certainly she is not for those who deny her: for like a woman she never gives of her riches nor yields her beauty to one who slights and ignores her, as the Buddhists do and, worse still, teach others to slight and ignore her. Such teaching must inevitably tend to discontent, to seclusion and to idleness—in a word, to neglect of all that Mother Nature gives to those of her children who, having faith in her, labour for her, laugh with her and suffer too with her. What centuries of Buddhistic teaching can make of a people, the Burmese are a good example and a warning to all others for all time.

Previous to British occupation, in the Burma of the Burmese there was nothing so prominent and engrossing as their religion. In those days it dominated the entire life of the people. What is the first thing a visitor notices as he approaches the Burmese country-side? The spires of the pagodas and the high roofs of the monasteries rising amid the trees. From their height and frequency it seems as if the people's lives and souls lay under their shadow and their influence. And in reality it was so. Buddhism had come into the life of the Burmese as religion has seldom come into the life of any other people in the world. 'From the cradle to the grave it held them, not in bonds of discipline but of influence,' says Fielding

Hall, the great authority on Burma and the Burmese. 'Buddhism penetrated their lives,' he continues, 'with its subtle currents, leading them whither it would—softening, sweetening, weakening. It seemed as if some strange lotus-eater's lullaby was crooned beneath the palms and flowers for ever and ever—"Life is not good. Death is the best of all. Learn to forget. Struggle no more. Run away from life and the weariness of the flesh and enter the Haven of *Nibbana* where there is perpetual Calm and unruffled Peace." There was no noise and bustle of the world to drown the long, low hypnotic notes of this baleful lullaby. There was no fight, no race, and no struggle to distract men. Ambition had no goal, and fear no abyss. In all Burma the Buddhist monks held highest position. They lived alone, on charity, without rank, without wealth, without power, yet the most powerful, the highest in rank of all men in Burma. They taught that life was never good but always evil, that money was harmful, that the cardinal virtues were compassion, gentleness, charity. And the tragic part of it all was the people believed. . . . The first and greatest truth is to make the best use of this beautiful world God has given us. This truth that the Earth is for those who can appreciate her and use her, the Burmese were never taught by their religious teachers.' What was the consequence of this neglect of positive teaching? In the long pre-British period of Burma's history, its people never learnt the

first lesson which all people all over the world have unconsciously learnt and laid to heart. The lesson that before all prophets and all teachers there lived on earth the God *Necessity*. Older than all faiths, older than mankind, older than Life itself, was his Gospel of Effort and Efficiency. This God was stern and pitiless. He lives still and his Gospel endures and will to the end of time—though in the meantime a hundred Buddhas may come and go, preaching and proclaiming the contrary. The lesson that God Necessity is the Maker of Men and the truth that the Earth is for those who can appraise and appreciate her best and use her to the utmost and noblest advantage the Burmese were never taught, never knew in fact nor had unfortunately any occasion to know. In the secluded security and assured fertility of their great Valley between the sea and the mountain-ranges there was no need of that stern lesson being taught. Consequently, unsharpened by the clash and pressure of the outside world, the manly side of their nature remained undeveloped and so sank into indolent effeminacy. To this natural calamity of theirs was added a religion, divorced from the fundamental realities of life, which still further softened and weakened them by its creed of Negation, and to such an extent that when a nation from the West, preaching another gospel, not newer but older, the world-old Gospel of Effort and Efficiency, came into conflict with them, they just went flop before it without offering any resistance whatever.

How beautifully, therefore, Buddhism lends itself for the slow and steady emasculation of a people, Pre-British Burma is at once an example and a warning to all other people for all time.

The low valuation which Buddha set on the things of this world has led exponents of Buddhism, like Franke, to deduce that Buddha did not believe in the reality of Existence. The deduction, though faulty, is understandable. It is, however, evident that Buddha neither did nor ever could have lacked such a belief. For him the reality of existence was unquestionable, only he deplored the misery and inanity which inevitably and ineradicably accompanied it, and it was this fact of accompanying misery and inanity which led Buddha to the elaboration of his doctrine of Salvation. Saith the Master: 'As the vast ocean is impregnated with but one taste—the taste of salt—likewise, O disciples, my *dhamma*, my entire teaching is impregnated with but one taste—the taste of Deliverance from *Dukkha*.'

In his *Buddhism*, Sir William Monier says: 'Buddha altogether ignored in human nature any spiritual aspirations.' This is a sweeping statement, but Sir William does not make it without justification. Let us, for instance, take the master-desire of the human heart, the desire for Immortality. We select this desire for consideration because of all spiritual aspirations it is at once the most universal and fundamental. We call it a spiritual aspiration because it unquestionably directs itself towards the far-off and the

invisible. The desire for Immortality may or may not be delusive, but it is assuredly not base nor selfish as some Buddhiologists say it is. For what is, after all, this desire for Immortality? Is it not the ennobling desire to grow, to evolve and move onwards and upwards towards the goal of natural perfection? Why does every human heart consciously or unconsciously cherish this desire? Because we all, normally and healthily constituted, feel that 'we are greater than we know.' We feel that the scale of our life and the scope of our work are greater, much greater than we can ever imagine or consciously think out. It would be, therefore, manifestly absurd to suppose that the Soul with such wide capacity could cover the full measure of its possible growth in a single span of life or that the Soul's desire for continued growth and limitless expansion is or could possibly be selfish. A man must no longer live for himself to reach the higher wisdom. The first-person pronoun must fade away before serenity of soul can be attained. Every religion that is worth the name warns us against 'the mean little individual life' and at the same time exhorts us 'to lose ourselves in something greater than ourselves.' 'Whosoever would save his life, shall lose it' is as true in Buddhism as in Christianity. The whole teaching of History is strictly in accord with this teaching of religions for a quickening of the Conscience for generous and self-forgetful ends. There is to be sure no social order, no security, no peace or happiness for men, no righteous leadership

or comradeship, unless they lose themselves. The study of biological progress reveals exactly the same process—the merger of the narrower into the more expansive organism. Whatever, therefore, may be the case in the earlier, immature periods of its existence, in the later and more advanced stages of its development, the Soul is necessarily redeemed from selfishness by the fact that it can continue to grow only on the condition that it becomes each day less self-seeking and more humanistic, less separative and more world-embracing.

And there is no surer way for the Soul to become less self-seeking and more humanistic and world-embracing than by taking to the Highway of Art. It is in the Domain of Art that the Spirit of Man finds its true self, assumes its noblest aspect and escapes from the thralldom of Time and Space. Here Buddhist Art has played a noble part in spreading the fame and glory of Buddhism. Buddhism has, in fact, come more prominently to the notice of the world through its graphic and its plastic art than through its creed and philosophy. For Art as understood by right-thinking minds and as expounded by faithful hearts and diligent hands is potentially a far greater vehicle for the instruction of mankind than any other conceived of by the brain of man. Its lessons are all but indestructible and its teachings have the advantage of being delivered through a medium that the poorest as well as the richest, whether taught or untaught, whether of mean capacity or

enlarged, can see and understand. The artist of the right type is an eternal teacher, for he can reach forward with his invisible filaments, proceeding from his sympathetic intuitions, as far as the scholar and much further. And what is the instruction, and what are the impulses the ancient Buddhist Art has left as a legacy to the world? For an answer let us go to a great admirer of Buddhist Art and himself an artist of no mean fame in India. The impulses which the Buddhist Artist has left to the world are, says this authority: 'the happy impulses of Optimism which are shot through the fibres of modern men across a gulf of fifteen or twenty centuries. How great then must once have been the battery whose surcharged forces are yet unspent and vitalizing! What must once have been the feast of colour, what the riot of elusive line, what the dignity of supernal form which shattered and seen in their late decline to-day yet transcend so loftily our dreams of a lesser beauty as to annihilate the mortal barrier and to flood the soul with light as from a window of the Unseen! To me the Sanctuary of Ajanta is quite simply the ante-chamber of Heaven. And if it is not Heaven itself, that is but because all great art holds in its manifestations the hint of something greater yet Beyond. . . . The colour, the colour, and again the colour of Ajanta! Who can mistake these golden shrines for caves? Are they not rather nooks where Peris have nested? And the walls—have they not caught their rainbow hues from the

brushing of ambrosial pinions? One of the best lessons taught us by those Buddhist artists is the lesson of Enthusiasm. There is nothing to be ashamed of in enthusiasm. It is a blessed gift. Enthusiasm can wing souls to overleap all obstacles. That the Ajanta paintings are the triumphs of enthusiastic spirits there can be no doubt; the same spirit that actuated the excavators in their incredible victories over the basalt cliffs, buoyed up the painters, as the clouds buoy up the saints in the dome of Parma Cathedral. And what then was the secret of this power—this enthusiasm?—for we should all like to possess it. I think it lay in the intense Optimism of the Buddhist Artists.’¹

I was myself swept away by the same kind of enthusiasm as Mr. Gladstone Solomon was when I stood before and rapturously gazed at the immortal paintings of the artist-monks of Ajanta. The note of Enthusiasm and Optimism which Buddhist Art strikes is quite different, nay the very opposite of the ideal of Negation and Pessimism which the Buddhist Creed upholds. How, then, are we to explain this open contradictoriness of Buddhist Art and Buddhist Creed? How are we to reconcile the *joie-de-vivre* of Buddhist Art with the Abrogation of Life of the Buddhist Creed? For surely one was the pure outcome of the other. But for Buddhism there could have been no Buddhist Art, and yet Buddhist Art, revelling in its own creed of joy

¹ *Jottings at Ajanta*, by W. E. Gladstone Solomon, pp. 2-4.

and colour, of enthusiasm and optimism, gives the lie direct to the basic ideas of the Buddhist Creed of despair and defeatism, of pessimism and abrogation of life. The only way we can explain this inexplicable contradictoriness is by arguing that the natural instincts of joy and enthusiasm of the Buddhist monks of Ajanta, Ellora and other caves, being *long repressed* by the Buddhist Creed of negation and abrogation of life, broke out by a kind of *natural revulsion* into the joy and ecstasy of Creative Art. And once the flood-gates of Creative Art were opened, its onward rush of joy and enthusiasm knew no bounds and swept away all negative forces contradictory to its own nature. This accounts for the victory of the Buddhist Art of Optimism and Enthusiasm over the Buddhist Creed of Pessimism and Negation of Life.

When all is said that could be said against Buddha's philosophy of life and the most formidable arguments have been levelled against his Creed of Negation, the fact nevertheless remains that with the two exceptions of Christ and Mohammed no personality that we know of in historic times has touched the imagination and captured the heart of humanity with the ease and tenacity that Buddha did, nor has any other creed so immediately and so profoundly moulded the destiny of Asia as his has. What is the secret of Buddha's hold on the mind and imagination of vast numbers of Asiatic humanity for over two

thousand years? Does his personality awaken and vibrate some long-neglected chord of the human heart? Does his creed touch some secret spring, deep down in the abysmal depths of the human soul? Or do they both, creed and personality, satisfy some element in human life that save for them had still remained unsatisfied? Whatever the reason may be, there is no gain-saying the fact that Gautama Buddha was the greatest thinker the world has ever known.¹ In cold, hard, logical thinking neither Mohammed nor Christ were a match for him and only Zoroaster and Socrates, Aristotle and Bacon might be set up as rivals to him. If his creed has captured the heart and imagination of a fifth of the entire humanfold, it is because his creed put Reason above Revelation, intellectual conviction above scriptural authority, and the practical realities of life above arid metaphysical speculation. Not content with these achievements, Buddha strove to set up a monastic brotherhood of self-denying social workers in place of hereditary priestcraft of self-aggrandizing clericals. More, he tried to instil a popular doctrine of Righteousness, stripped of barren dogmatism, to infuse a truly humanistic spirit overcoming national exclusiveness, in a word, to rouse true, practical world-wide Humanism based on an idealism shorn of inept

¹ 'The fundamental teaching of Gautama, as it is now being made plain to us by the study of original sources, is beyond all dispute the achievement of one of the most penetrating intelligences the world has ever known.'—H. G. Wells's *Outline of History*, ch. xxiv, 3.

asceticism, paralysing austerities, and unfruitful visionariness. He taught that for salvation the Buddhist must depend solely and entirely upon himself. The bare idea of Vicarious Redemption he condemned as wholly opposed to the genius of Buddhism. But the greatest lesson Buddha teaches us is that *there is hope for man only in man* and not in any outside power, divine or otherwise, and that—'that love is false which clings to love for selfish sweets of love.'

If what I have said above is true, then Buddhism should have a great and assured Future. And so it has; but, only among that division of mankind which by natural disposition or bitter experience of life has come to realize the present futility, unredeemed misery, and ultimate purposelessness of earthly existence as such. But among the other division of mankind which is of a sturdier build and robuster disposition, which in the many misfortunes, constant buffetings, and disheartening limitations of earthly existence sees and can only see the Eternal Challenge of Life calling upon mankind to steel its nerves and stiffen its sinews for greater activity and more determined effort to rise superior to those misfortunes, buffetings, and limitations and extract whatever of peace and joy, courage and wisdom is to be had out of its immediate surroundings—mean and discouraging though these last be—Buddhism has not only no definite future, but no future whatever.

Then Welcome each Rebuff
 That turns earth's smoothness rough,
 Each Sting that bids not sit nor stand but Go:
 Be our Joys three-quarters Pain!
 Strive and hold cheap the strain:
 Learn, nor account the Pang; dare, never grudge
 the Throe.

These immortal lines of Browning would have no place in Buddhism nor convey any sense to a devout Buddhist. This explains why the seeds of Buddhism when broadcast in the West have for all practical purposes fallen on hard, unyielding ground and only in the East have succeeded in finding a soil peculiarly suited to their nature. This also accounts for the fact that the positive Gospel of Christianity with its promise of 'Life and more abundant Life' has spread all over the West, while the negative Idealism of Buddhism with its creed of 'Complete Abrogation of Life' has found appropriate atmosphere, suitable soil and apt pupils in the East. Says Paul Dahlke: 'The inestimable historic fact is that Buddhism has exercised a tremendous influence over the mental life of humanity, at once in its breadth and its length. The greatest body of land on the Globe, the Continent of Asia, owes its stamp, its particular character to Buddhism. Asia, even to-day, is the Buddhist Continent.'

In making so large and so obviously absurd and untenable a claim for the Buddhism of to-day, Dahlke is evidently carried away more by his love and enthusiasm for Gautama and his creed

than by his zeal and earnestness for seeing and facing realities as they are. Nevertheless, if the message of a prophet brings peace and contentment equally to all—equally to Bimbisara, the sovereign lord of the Magadhas, and the beggar Indaka, to the Sakyan Queen-Mother, Prajapati, and the despised Sunita, the outcast scavenger, to the merchant-prince Anatha Pindika and the Brahman sage Pokkhara-Sati, to the high-souled matron, Visakha and the light-hearted courtesan, Ambapali—that message has a right to live and spread its light and influence among those of its own kind, humour, and predilection. And if there is a message that can with justification lay claim to have made a very strong appeal to a very large section of humanity by the iron logic of its construction, by the rationality of its views, and the catholicity of its ideals, it is the Message that was proclaimed to mankind twenty-five centuries ago in the Grove of Uruveli—that grand old Message of the world-wearied, sorrow-stricken, life-loathing Royal Recluse—The Message of Buddha—

AUM MANI PADME HUM

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